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ANNA OF THE FIVE TOWNS
LEONORA A GREAT MAN
SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE
WHOM GOD HATH JOINED
BURIED ALIVE THE PRICE OF LOVE
THE OLD WIVES' TALE THESE TWAIN
THE GLIMPSE THE ROLL-CALL
HELEN WITH THE HIGH HAND
THE CARD THE PRETTY LADY
THE REGENT MR. PROHACK
THE LION'S SHARE LILIAN
CLAYHANGER RICEYMAN STEPS
HILDA LESSWAYS

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THINGS THAT HAVE
INTERESTED ME

THIRD SERIES

THE SAINT MARY COLLEGE
LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS

THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME

BY

ARNOLD BENNETT

THIRD SERIES

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THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME

THE LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH

IN connection with the history of the Lyric, Hammersmith, I wish very briefly to discuss three subjects.

The first is the institution known as the "backer." Next to the landlord the backer is the most abused person in the world of the stage—perhaps justly, perhaps unjustly. He is said to demand, in return for risking his capital, a deciding voice in the selection of plays—and of players. He is even known to force his own plays (which invariably fail) on the manager for whom he signs cheques. As a rule he loses money. A high light of the revue world informed me a few months ago that backers never made profits out of a musical show. The statement was probably exaggerated, but there is a lot of tragic truth in it. Certainly far more money is lost than made in the theatre. Certainly, also, backers would lose less money if they confined them-

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selves to being theatrical capitalists, without meddling further in matters which they profoundly misunderstand. Managers are often very stupid, but they are rarely so stupid as their capitalists.

When, after an interview with Nigel Playfair in his dressing-room at the Royalty Theatre, I went forth to collect the capital which I had rashly promised him, I bore these views well in mind. I first mentioned the Lyric scheme to Sir Harold Snagge, at a club lunch. Before I could ask him for money he offered me £1000. I said to him :

“ You will probably drop every penny of it. And, anyhow, you will have no control whatever over the use of it.”

He maintained his offer. I then went to Lord Beaverbrook, and similarly addressed him. He furnished £1000. I then said to him :

“ Can you support me with Lord Rothermere and Sir Edward Hulton ? ”

He said he would. He did. And Lord Rothermere and Sir Edward Hulton came in with £1000 each. After the same fashion I enlisted one or two other bankers, bill-brokers, and similar people of the kind in whose sight £1000 is no more than fourpence in mine.

THE LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH

I was asked whether I should "come in" myself. I said :

"Positively not, beyond taking shares sufficient to justify me for directorship! Nothing would induce me to put money into any theatrical enterprise. Time is money. I risk my time in theatres, and I will not risk both time and money."

I must say that I thought I had been rather clever, for in addition to obtaining millionaire-capitalists I had obtained the proprietors of about 99 per cent. of the London press. The terrible capitalist press, however, has not broken its neck in trying to serve the interests of the Lyric, Hammersmith. It has frequently ignored our productions, more frequently damned them with faint praise, and sometimes abused them. Not long since we presented the finest play of modern times, and one illustrious organ, the property of a prominent shareholder, described it as "fatuous drivel." I was moved to complain seriously about this outrage. But did I get any redress? I did not.

Still, I willingly admit that the millionaires have never tried to interfere in the management of the theatre. They have never suggested a play, nor an artiste. They have

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never attended a shareholders' meeting. And I much doubt whether they have ever attended a first night. They have, indeed, behaved in an ideal manner, and set an example which I recommend heartily to all backers. I admit also that I buoyed them up with false promises. I swore to them that they would lose their money, and they have not lost it—yet.



The second subject is the “unlucky theatre.” Nigel Playfair took what might fairly have been described as the unluckiest theatre in London. It is hidden in a slum; the slum lies off a street that the West End had never heard of, and the cab-fare to which from the West End is about four shillings. The trains of the Metropolitan Railway shriek, grind, and roar within twenty yards of the building. And I imagine that the theatre had not had a success, or half a success, for about twenty years. We were laughed at for the madness of leasing such a theatre. We heard a very great deal about unlucky theatres. But I have never believed in the existence of the unlucky theatre. I have only believed in the existence of the theatre where unpopular productions are offered.

Three West End theatres used to be re-

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garded as unlucky by the entire theatrical profession : the Royalty, the Kingsway, and the Court. The Royalty came into the hands of the daring firm of Vedrenne & Eadie. I have had four plays done there. The first ran for about thirty performances, the second for about a hundred, the third for over six hundred, and the fourth for nearly three hundred. The Royalty is now worth at least three times what it was when I started there, and I reckon that (with Edward Knoblock) I have helped to put about £150,000 unearned increment into the coffers of the landlord and the lessee of this "unlucky" theatre.

The Kingsway had a terrible name for misfortune. Nobody would look at it. Kingsway was the theatrical way of spelling the word bankruptcy. It could be hired for about 3¼d. a decade. It came into the hands of Granville Barker, and, right off, Bernard Shaw and I had, between us, thirteen hundred performances of two plays there, one of which had been hawked all over the West End for two years.

As for the Court Theatre, it is sufficient to remark that Eden Phillpotts's comedy, *The Farmer's Wife*, is now approaching its thousandth performance therein.

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Anyhow, I have given some proof that unlucky theatres do not exist. And I felt no fear on that score for the Lyric, Hammersmith. Before a baby could learn to talk, the Lyric, Hammersmith, had begun to beat every record in the West End, save only *Chu Chin Chow*. I am now unalterably established in my ancient belief that the public, such is their hunger for real entertainment, will go anywhere, and submit to any inconvenience, in order to obtain it.



The third subject is popular taste. I submit that the average West End manager (there is at least one exception) obstinately underrates the intelligence of the public, and that more and more rapidly the public is outstripping the managers in this particular. Only a playwright who has tried to sell plays not exactly like all other plays can measure the cowardice and the reactionary imbecility of managers. Managers still continue to produce any kind of worthlessness, provided that it is in the antique tradition, gives no food for thought, offends none of the susceptibilities which they suppose the public to possess. They go on and they go on. Facts beat against the iron doors of

THE LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH

their minds, but they will not open. At the Lyric, Hammersmith, no play or piece has been given which the Directors (Nigel Playfair, Alistair Tayler, and myself) did not unanimously believe to have considerable artistic merit. There is no exception to this. West End managers are fond of referring to the Lyric Board as amateurs. Nevertheless the Lyric Board, in face of some unique difficulties, has successfully remained in management for over seven years, and the Lyric Theatre has made handsome profits, on the policy of trusting the intelligence of the public.

The public has even taught lessons in faith to the Lyric Board. At the rehearsals of *The Way of the World*, for instance, I said that the production was marvellous, but that it was bound to fail. I knew in my bones that it would fail. It succeeded handsomely, and played to record houses. Again, when it was decided to ask Bernard Fagan to produce *The Cherry Orchard* at the Lyric, I said from the beginning that it could not possibly succeed. And I was agreed with, though we were determined whatever happened to present the finest play of modern times. I could not learn from experience. For a week after the pro-

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duction we were convinced we had a failure, and we rapidly made unchangeable arrangements for another production. Then the business leaped up and showed a profit, and *The Cherry Orchard*—*The Cherry Orchard*, a play utterly revolutionary, a play outraging every convention and every imagined susceptibility, a play which no manager would have looked at a fortnight earlier—*The Cherry Orchard* marched off to the West End, where it ran for a hundred and fifty performances. Whatever the fortunes of *The Cherry Orchard* in the West End, the mere transfer of it to a fashionable theatre marked an epoch in the history of the London stage.¹ It was a final proof of the evolution of public taste. In another fifty years the average West End manager may just possibly discern that something progressive has happened in the most conservative of little worlds.

¹ Since writing the above I have learned that Mr. James Agate very enthusiastically praised *The Cherry Orchard* in his weekly broadcast lecture on current plays. This praise must have had a very considerable influence in sending playgoers to see *The Cherry Orchard*.

AUDIBILITY IN THEATRES

I WITNESSED an English version of von Scholz's *The Race with the Shadow* at the Court Theatre, given by the Stage Society. The play was produced by Theodore Komisarjevsky, formerly Producer and Art Director of the Moscow State and Imperial Theatre ; and special importance was attached by the Committee of the Stage Society to this fact. I sat in row K of the stalls and there were seven rows behind me. Mr. Komisarjevsky had evidently aimed at, among other things, realism in speech. The characters, for no dramatic reason, would stand for considerable periods with their backs to the audience ; they would whisper ; they would murmur ; they would drop syllables and whole words ; they would put their hands over their mouths. All very true to life ; but carrying realism to excess, carrying it much further than the author or the scene-painter or the stage manager carried it. The slowness of pace I could get accustomed to, after a few minutes, but I could not get accustomed to not hearing. Entire speeches were lost in the air between me and the stage, and various psychological

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details became incomprehensible through the vanishing of a key-word.



The first thing, on the stage, is to get oneself heard clearly by the audience without putting a strain on the average ear. This is probably a platitude, and yet at rehearsals of my own plays I spend half my time in reiterating it, and once I made a star actress very cross by telling her that it is useless to act magnificently until one is audible. In the case of *The Race with the Shadow* a very interesting night was about 50 per cent. ruined by Mr. Komisarjevsky's anxiety to attain realism of speech. He seemed to me (who could not produce a play to save my life) to have forgotten that no stage representation, and no part of it, can properly be realistic beyond a certain degree. It is and must be one enormous compromise with realism. Thousands of trifles have to be sacrificed in order to achieve a broad effect of truth. The West End stage is notorious for inaudibility, but this night was the most outrageous illustration of inaudibility that I have ever endured, even in the West End. I hurried to dressing-rooms and remonstrated

AUDIBILITY IN THEATRES

with the admirable chief players. They were rightly alarmed, and promised with eagerness to reform, but in the next act they went on just as before. What the people at the nether end of the auditorium made of the piece I cannot imagine. But the patience of pittites is amazing ; it is heroic. For one reason or another about one-third of the accommodation in most theatres is merely vile. Either you are asphyxiated, or you are beaten by arctic winds, or your limbs are martyred, or you can't hear, or you can't see ; and the implied contract between management and playgoers is thus nightly broken.

Nevertheless, no theatre has yet been burnt down by furious playgoers.

SHAKSPERE AND THE STAGE

FOR a number of decades past Shakspeare has had an uphill fight in his own country—indeed ever since he went to live in Germany (where it is understood the wraith still resides, flitting from State-aided theatre to municipal-aided theatre)! And even before that; for in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century his plays were continuously “improved” by persons who wrote with crow-bars and besoms rather than with pens. But he is not yet beaten.

In my own experience when Shakspeare has been given a fair chance he wins. It was not until I saw *Hamlet* entire, under the auspices of Forbes Robertson at the Lyceum many years ago, that I could say to myself, “After all, *Hamlet* is the finest play ever written!” The emotional effect of that affair was terrific. I remember seeing a young painter burst into tears just before the end; his wife, one of those practical people who make England what England is, said to him, “Don’t be silly, Fred. You know it’s not real.” (Only it was real.) It was the same when *Hamlet* was done without cuts at the Old Vic a year or two since. The

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thing simply overpowered everybody. It was the same when Antoine did *King Lear* complete (in two hours and ten minutes !) in Paris at the beginning of this century. One left the theatre hypnotised. And the other Sunday the first half of *A Winter's Tale* (with an astonishing performance by Lilian Braithwaite) held the audience in a grip far tighter than the grip of any amount of green goddesses or Drummonds of the bulldog breed.



Shakspeare has been handicapped in Britain and America by three main influences. First, the influence of producers who in defiance of history had convinced themselves that the most dramatic dramatist that ever lived would prove flaccid unless he was stiffened with vast masses of grandiose scenery and costumes—which scenery and costumes merely choked the man. Second, by producers who were determined to read all sorts of subtleties into the robust and vigorous Shakspeare who wrote for, and delighted, a howling mob. Third, by stars. You don't want, and can't successfully have, two stars in a single play. Shakspeare is one star.

By the time a star has finished producing

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Shakspeare, Shakspeare might as well have been thrown into the middle of the Strand and run over by thirteen K motor-buses. Stars cut all the parts but their own ; they alter and minimise all the “ business ” but their own ; and they most disastrously affect the casting. Stars are, to say the least, mature beings. As surely as a star plays, for example, Viola, so surely you will see a perfect hag put into the part of Olivia—to save Viola’s face. And so on.

The greatest modern English star was Herbert Tree. His Shakspearean productions were marvellous circuses ; but if Shakspeare had witnessed them he would probably have exclaimed, “ Who *was* the fellow that wrote this ? ” Tree’s Malvolio was an impersonation of genius—the Malvolio of all the ages. But I doubt whether Shakspeare really intended Malvolio to be the pivot of *Twelfth Night*.

THE PRODUCER AND THE PRESS

WITHIN recent years the producer has achieved considerable prominence in the journalism of the theatre. He is now nearly always named by name in the programme, and he is frequently mentioned—too casually perhaps—by dramatic critics in their notices of plays. The new state of affairs sometimes makes old actors resentfully cross. I have heard them refer to the happy ancient years when there were no producers, and when plays mysteriously got themselves produced without the aid of this conceited upstart and autocratic innovation. (I may say that I do not believe a bit in the tale of the happy ancient years when there were no producers. A play cannot conceivably be produced unless somebody takes charge of it, and that somebody is the producer, and ever was and will be.)

In any case, the producer is nowadays very much on the map; and theatrical journalism has taken note of his existence, though it persists in putting him and his activity in inverted commas—"producer," "produce"—as if he and his work were still enigmatic, un-

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defined, and not wholly worthy of credence. Nothing surprising in this! Everybody professionally connected with the stage knows that dramatic criticism is, as regards 90 per cent. of it, steadily a couple of decades behind the times—which is human and possibly forgivable.

Nevertheless, I think the moment has come to inform the 90 per cent. that artistically the person chiefly responsible for a play—after the author—is the producer, and that up to the hour of going to press extremely little criticism of producing has been seen in the great dailies and weeklies of this island. And further, that production does not, as they seem to suppose, consist solely in arranging the scenery, lighting, “effects,” and incidental music of a play. “As regards the ‘production’ . . .” say the 90 per cent., *after* having criticised the acting! The producer, among his other responsibilities, is responsible for the acting, and many criticisms directed against individual artistes ought to be directed against the producer.



Not that I object to criticism of actors and actresses. I love it. I love anything which distracts attention from the crimes of the author. In the happy ancient years actors

*criticism
P. Anderson*

THE PRODUCER AND THE PRESS

and actresses were seldom adversely criticised. Dramatic critics represented them as unfortunate beings who by their charm and their talents saved deplorably bad plays from complete disaster. The newer criticism has altered that, and I know of my own knowledge that the outspokenness about acting of such critics as St. John Ervine, James Agate, and Sidney Carroll has occasionally had an excellent practical effect on individual performers, startled and infuriated though these may have been.

At the same time, more often than not, it happens that what critics rightly or wrongly criticise in individual performers has been imposed upon the performers by the producer. When I read blame of Mr. A. because he was too hurried, of Mr. B. because he was too slow, of Mr. C. because his business was clumsy, of Mr. D. because he was too rugged, of Miss E. because she simpered, of Miss F. because she was restless, of Mrs. G. because she was too *grande dame*, and so on down to Mrs. Z. because she was inaudible, I say to myself, "Yes, all very well ! But what was the producer up to ?" Most of these faults, if faults they are, were unquestionably due to the pro-

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ducer, who would probably put up a pretty good defence of them. The last fault was of course the fault of Mrs. Z. herself, but it was the producer's fault too, since he failed to correct it.



Dramatic critics ought to take a new avenue of approach to a play. They ought to remember, first, that the extremely important business of casting is in the main the function of the producer; and second, that all points of speed, style, mood, tone, and business are regulated by the producer. They ought to look upon the entire spectacle as primarily the artistic creation of the producer. They ought to award both far more praise and far more blame to the producer than they in fact do. I admit that the producer is rarely an absolute autocrat. Now and then a "star" will defy him and he is compelled to submit. Now and then also a comparatively humble performer, after affecting to yield throughout a month of rehearsals, will go on the stage on the first night and do as he chooses, and the producer is helpless. But, broadly speaking, the producer rules. If he can't, he has mistaken his vocation.

THE PLAY-SUPPLY

ONE hears that there is something gravely wrong with the British stage. If so, the dramatist ought to be blamed first and most, for the foundation of the stage is the play. But is there anything seriously wrong with the British stage? For my part, I am convinced that the British stage is in a better condition to-day than it has been within the memory of living man. I reckon that there were, at the end of a recent London season, nine modern English plays of genuine interest to be seen in the West End. I may as well have the courage of my opinion and name them: *The Farmer's Wife*, *The Mask and the Face*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Our Betters*, *Saint Joan*, *White Cargo*, *Storm*, *Tiger Cats*, and *To Have the Honour*. (The order is that of the advertisements in the daily papers.) There may be more.

This is surely a very high percentage. I am quite sure that during the same Paris season there were not nine plays of genuine interest to be seen at once. Indeed, I think that the British stage compares very favourably with any foreign stage. (Beyond doubt, the

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supreme world-influence in the theatre is Irish.) I think that the fuss made over George Kaiser, for instance, is ridiculous, and that Pirandello is overpraised, and that Martinez de Sierra has a very trifling talent. And it staggers me that the amiable and amorphous confections of Sacha Guitry should be taken seriously. As for Eugene O'Neill—well, I respect him just as much as I can respect any sentimentalist, but I hold George Cohan to be a vastly superior playwright to O'Neill.

Still, the British stage ought to be better than it is. More good plays ought to be written. Very few good plays are being written, especially by young or unknown men. The current notion that large numbers of promising talents are knocking in vain at the doors of managers is wildly wrong. I know, because I have been intimately and continuously connected with the management of a very broad-minded theatre for a number of years. I should say that out of a thousand plays submitted to that theatre not twenty needed prolonged consideration, and I should doubt whether ten were in any way possible.



The cry of managers is always, "I want a

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play ; tell me where I can get a play." I have heard that cry, painfully sincere in its agony, dozens of times.

Yes ! But managers are very naughty. Most of them always want something that is exactly like something else. How often have Edward Knoblock and I listened to the impassioned and silly appeal, "Give us another *Milestones*" ! And how often have I been begged, yea, with tears of yearning, to sit down and write another *Great Adventure* !

Again, managers have such funny rules governing acceptance or rejection. One of them insists on being a collaborator. Another won't take a play unless he is allowed to design the scenery himself. Another won't give hospitality to a hero older than thirty-five. Another is the guardian of our morals. "I like the play," said this gentleman once, "but there is a seduction in the plot. Seductions are contrary to the policy of my theatre."

True, few interesting plays are being written, but a few *are* being written, and it is precisely those few that, as a rule, managers unanimously reject. A famine exists ; managers are dying of hunger. Offer them a new loaf, and they turn away from it in fear.

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"No," they say, "you mustn't ask me to eat that; it's not stale." And go on bravely dying.

The Sunday producing societies and the excentric (not eccentric) theatres have acquired much merit by educating West End managers in this respect, though West End managers are excessively hard to educate. One sees these managers spending money on preposterously footling plays which any one not a manager would set down as not having a thousand-to-one chance of success, while turning their backs on other plays which, if admittedly risky, have, at any rate, the probability of giving some artistic prestige to the producer.



Take, for example, *At Mrs. Beam's*. When this brilliant play, by our most promising younger talent, was originally produced by the Stage Society I did all I could to boom it, and I talked about it till I was sick. No result! Then, after a long interval, the Everyman Theatre did it. And at last Dennis Eadie found courage. It ran. Take *Outward Bound*. Never would the West End have seen this uneven play, with a first act original enough to

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wake the dead, if artistic enthusiasts had not produced it first. Yet in the West End it survived five flittings from theatre to theatre.

Similarly with *The Mask and the Face*. When I went to Hampstead to see *The Mask and the Face* I found four West End managerial persons in the audience—or was it five? “Hello!” I said to myself. “The West End is sitting up.” But nothing happened.

Later I met one of the managers at lunch. Had he bought *The Mask and the Face*? No, he had not. He couldn’t decide. He was afraid. I urged him, with persuasion and taunts and invective, to buy it. But he didn’t. At length somebody else bought it. We know how the West End received it.

Let me here admit, in all seriousness, that the business of being a West End manager is a very difficult one. It assuredly is. Let me admit that nobody, not even a playwright, can tell with any certitude in advance whether or not a play will succeed. Managers have to take risks. My point is that if they would deign to educate themselves a little, and let themselves be educated, they might, with advantage to themselves and the stage, take

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risks on original plays instead of on unoriginal plays.

And as to the risks ! In the first place, it is seldom their own money that they risk, anyway. And, in the second place, they always talk as if they alone had to take risks. The playwright takes just as much risk as the manager. His time is his livelihood. He may lose it—often does. A playwright may spend three months in writing a play and a month in attending rehearsals. (I say nothing of the time spent in selling it !) And if the play fails, he may come out with anything from £200 to zero ; but the manager is drawing a salary throughout.

Which reminds me that people say solemnly that the theatre would be better if authors of standing outside the theatre did not turn to the theatre merely as a means of money-making. They don't. The rewards of the successful play are grossly exaggerated in the public mind. No novelist of established prestige and good circulation, in search of *money*, would leave writing novels for a time in order to write plays—unless he was an ass. With novels there are no risks for authors of established prestige. Some success is abso-

THE PLAY-SUPPLY

lutely certain, and the bulk of the reward comes punctually on the day of publication. Year in, year out, there is for such authors far more money, far less humiliation, infinitely less risk in novels than in plays. And if they *do* turn to the stage it is because they are driven thereto by a powerful instinct, even to their financial disadvantage.

ACTING

SOME very elementary observations have to be made about West End acting. An actor's first business is to be clearly heard, not only in the first row of the stalls, but also in the back row of the pit. The curse of the West End stage is inaudibility. I have heard hundreds of complaints on this point, and hundreds of times, even in the stalls, I have failed to catch the spoken words. My hearing is excellent. Nearly all good actors are perfectly audible ; few bad actors are perfectly audible. A large proportion of actors, if at rehearsals you tell them that they are not audible, begin to shout, or, at any rate, to put a strain on their throats. Audibility has nothing to do with shouting. They simply have never learnt how to pitch their voices ; they don't know the first thing about voice-production. The men are just as faulty as the women.

As to the more advanced stages of elocution, their ignorance is apparently complete. They persistently drop important syllables in words and important words in sentences—especially the last word in sentences. They do

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not know when to emphasise, when to run the tone up and when to run it down ; they cannot balance a sentence. All these matters they have to be taught, detail by detail, at rehearsals, and much time is spent on tuition which ought to be unnecessary and which the learners ought to be ashamed to have to accept.

Further, grave errors of pronunciation are rife in the West End. For example, the horrible interpolated “r” between two vowels. Thus many actors will pass from the cradle to the grave and never say correctly, “Soda-and-milk.” They will always say, “Soda-rand-milk” ! You expostulate with them. You say to them, “Don’t say ‘Soda-rand-milk’ ; say ‘Soda-and-milk.’ ” They look bland and then protest, “But I did say ‘Soda-rand-milk.’ ” You give it up.



Worse than this, English is often spoken on the stage with a bad accent, usually a cockney accent. Women are the worst sinners here. Two of the very foremost actresses in the West End to-day habitually speak with a cockney accent ; they are incapable of giving the “oo” sound as it ought to be given. Instead of saying “boon” they say “beoon,”

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with a trace of the French "u" sound. They are charming women; they are modest women; they are admirable actresses; they are heard to perfection; but they cannot talk English. It is very odd. Nobody seems to mind.

As for all the remainder of the technique of acting, I am not an expert, but by dint of assisting at hundreds of rehearsals I do know just a little about it. I assert that a considerable percentage of actors know almost nothing about it. They have to be taught, and taught afresh with every new play for which they are cast, how to use their legs, how to make a clean movement, how to convey a mood, how to change their expression, how to regulate their gestures, how to "put over" the simplest point. They are willing enough to learn, but some of them are incapable of learning.

All this may seem harsh and perhaps too downright; yet I don't think I have ever seen a producer at work who did not complain in terms far, far more violent. One is told that producers "produce" too much, leaving naught to the individual initiative of the actors. Well, as a rule, they have no alternative but to do as they do. All that I have

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said is a commonplace of the shop-talk of producers and of expert and experienced actors. It is notorious that amateurishness abounds. Amateurishness also flourishes. We have stars to-day, stars who can fill houses but who are rank amateurs and the scorn of experts. The order of achievement seems to be : Make a name first and learn to act afterwards. The public is uncritical. A superficially attractive personality, a pretty face, a handsome Byronic profile, is worth immensely more in the market than any amount of genuine talent and technical accomplishment. I do not grumble ; I state.

It is proper to add that amateurishness is mainly confined to the young. The older generation are not amateurs. They know their job. And what a relief it is at rehearsals when an old actor steps on the stage for his scene ! Of course, the old ought indeed to know more than the young. But I am not aware that the superiority of the old over the young is so marked among, say, writers, painters, or executive musicians. There must be a reason for it peculiar to the stage. Possibly I am talking like an old man. I do not know. What I do know is that I am talking sin-

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cerely and with as little prejudice as heaven permits.



The stage is said to be overcrowded. I think it is overcrowded with women, but not with men—and particularly not with young men of talent. The real test of the talent-supply comes when you cast a play. For any part women, of sorts, can generally be found who will acquit themselves creditably—according to West End standards. But if you have an important young male part, the puzzle is to find the male for it. I have heard the producer exclaim, “I simply *cannot* think of anybody who is free.” It is true to say that the supply of young men of fair gifts is greatly inferior to the demand. And that is one reason why we frequently see young parts played by men who are obviously too old for them. As for the young man who can satisfactorily bear on his shoulders the main weight of a play, I doubt if there are three examples of him in the West End to-day.

A rather gloomy survey? No; but a realistic survey. Out of a decent regard for the unavoidable sensitiveness of stage-artists (second only to the sensitiveness of authors

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and Cabinet Ministers), realism is seldom allowed to creep into surveys of the profession. Mine will be misinterpreted. I regret it, but what would you ? I could be equally realistic in laudation of the marvellous, the unsurpassable acting to be witnessed in the West End in the year of Wembley and Wimbledon. The supply of praise, however, is fully adequate to the need.

THE PLAYGOING PUBLIC

THE British stage is now supposed to be in the bad graces of the British public, the theory being that the public has grown tired of it, or at best indifferent to it. For myself, I should say that the British public has been somewhat indifferent to the stage for close upon three centuries. The stage has never recovered from the blow given to it by that masterful ruffian Oliver Cromwell. Even to-day an organisation such as the Church and Stage Guild is regarded as a daring business not altogether creditable to the Church, and millions of people will not go to the theatre unless they can persuade themselves that the piece they are to see is "good"—that is, preaches an uplifting lesson. Our chief playwright is a teacher before he is an amuser. At short intervals some divine, with an ungovernable passion for godliness or for self-advertisement, will rise up and denounce the theatre. There is nothing surprising in this; what is surprising is that he should be taken seriously—as he is.

Nor do I perceive any strong reason why the public, however enlightened or benighted,

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should make a special hobby of the British theatre. After all, in two hundred years it has produced only three plays that have stood the practical test of time—*The School for Scandal*, *The Rivals*, and *She Stoops to Conquer*.



At the present day, and for many a day past, the British public is and has been far more interested in the Turf, games, politics, crimes, motoring, and co-operative associations for the improvement of society than in the theatre. If you want to estimate the indifference of the British public to the theatre, compare its attitude with that of foreign countries, such as Germany, France, Austria, Russia, and the United States. In New York you will find sixty regular theatres, mostly full of a night. Yet the plays of New York are certainly no better than British plays. Indeed, many of them *are* British plays, performed by British actors. And the much-deplored competition of the films and the broadcasters is quite as severe in New York as in London. Of course, we have here the iniquitous Entertainment Tax. But we have also here the iniquitous tax on automobiles; yet the latter has had apparently no effect on the

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popularity of motoring. Lastly, we have high theatre rents. Yes, and we have, too, high house rents and high office rents, neither of which have diminished the demand for houses and offices. To match the increase in rents we see an increase in wages and in the price of manufactured articles. The one thing that has not gone up in price is the good theatre seat. No manager dares, appreciably, to put up the price, and the sole reason is the indifference of the British public to the theatre as an institution. Which indifference is historic, and not a temporary phenomenon due to economic causes, or competition, or summer-time, or heat, or rain, or bad plays, or anything else. The belief that Wembley would bring boom to the stage was just as fond as the later conviction that Wembley brought disaster to the stage.

Moreover, the indifference of the public is exaggerated in the Press and in the public mind. Many theatres did well during the alleged summer slump ; a few did magnificent business ; Shaftesbury Avenue remains on the map ; and I should imagine that more money can be and is being made in the theatre to-day than ever before. There used to be a close season for theatres. There is none now. The

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stage is not an institution to be brought low by any kind of rival attraction, and it will assuredly be flourishing when the films have come to be smiled at as a clumsy and exhausting diversion for tiny tots.

The artist ought to take the public as an act of God, and public taste as a climate. The public is never to blame. The public is perfectly entitled to like what it likes and to dislike what it dislikes. Its views on things cannot be altered; they can only alter themselves—and very slowly at that. Shopkeepers don't gird at the public when the public keeps out of their shops. They bow the head and change their policy, and blame themselves alone. The theatrical manager is a shopkeeper. He has something to sell; it may be distinguished or it may be vulgar—it is merchandise; it is for sale. If he doesn't contrive to sell it he is a failure, no matter what his ideals may be. A fine play exists in proportion to the number of occupied seats in the auditorium. If the auditorium is empty, the play may be a masterpiece, but it does not exist.



The greatest dramatist succeeded in pleasing the public and himself too. He took public

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taste into account, and retired at an early age with a fortune and a unique reputation. You may argue that public taste was better in Shakspeare's time than it is to-day. I agree. But if Shakspeare had lived to-day he would have done the trick equally well. Shakspeare, however, was extremely adroit, in which quality, as in most others, he far surpassed the Shaksperes of this age. The high-brows of this age would have called Shakspeare a pot-boiling time-server. So he was, and rightly ; but he was a lot more. Anyway, he understood the grand truth that a man's first duty is to boil the pot, not to flout the public while living on other people who do not flout the public.

To flout the public is bad manners, and I doubt whether any good end is served by flouting it. Flick it, give it a dig, smile politely at it, by all means, but don't smack it in the face. Respect its prejudices just as far as you self-respectingly can, and if you can't respect them at all, then cease attempting to cater for the public. All publics are difficult, callous, and ruthless. But none less so than the tepid British public. The British public is a faithful monster and a fundamentally decent monster. It has defects. Heavens !

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Its hatred of truth and its crass sentimentalism, which more than anything else impede the artistic progress of the British stage! But let us remember its qualities. I am inclined to think that the taste of the monster is improving—somewhat faster than the taste of the managers.

GAMES

I WISH that people, at any rate some people, would be more honest about the subject of games.

Consider the case of the middle-aged man who has taken to golf. Now golf is a very great game ; but it is also a game demanding much time and an elaborate apparatus, human and mechanical. My middle-aged man is quite likely to journey many miles in an automobile driven by a living chauffeur with a possibly immortal soul ; the whole device, with the golfer inside and a heavy bundle of instruments called for some strange reason clubs, is functioning that day so that he may play golf. He arrives at the links, and engages the services of another and younger human being whose sole purpose in life is to carry the bag of clubs on his shoulder or arm. He plays golf. He then enters a large building specially erected so that he may eat and drink in it and have baths in it on the days when he plays golf. The building and its numerous staff exist merely in order to sustain him and cleanse him in his hours of golf. He issues forth and plays again, returns to the building for more rites

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and ceremonies, and finally departs in the automobile, which with its living chauffeur has no doubt been hanging about for several hours.

He reaches home, full of virtue and pride, and meets his middle-aged wife, whom ten to one he has left solitary all day, and he proclaims to her that the golf has done him no end of good, and that without it he really does not know what his health would be like; and she replies that she is sure that the golf has done him no end of good, and that she is glad therefor, and that without golf she really does not know what mightn't happen to his health. And she tells everybody that her husband's golf is the saving of him. (No mention by either of them of any similar scheme for the preservation of *her* health.)

Well, it is all a vast fiction, this touching theory that he plays golf for his health's sake, and that if his health were not trembling in the balance he would not dream of giving so much time, trouble, and money to golf. I do not say that golf is not good for the health. It often is; it generally is (though it tempts middle-aged men to undue exertion, and before now middle-aged men have been known

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to drop down dead on golf courses through wrongly assuming that they were young).

But I do say that, as a scheme for maintaining health, golf is very clumsy and very costly, and somewhat inefficient. A man could maintain his health far more efficiently by doing certain physical exercises under the stern guidance of an expert, in front of an open window, for half an hour a day. And if he needed more fresh air he could simply and modestly go out for a walk. No apparatus! No attendants! A great economy of money and of time! And if he was genuinely interested in his health (which as a rule he is not) he could immensely improve it by merely refraining from doing silly things which he does in fact do six days out of seven.

Indeed in this respect he has no more sense, nor sense of proportion, than the smart young woman who spends two hours a day on the care of her complexion, and much of the remainder of the time in ruining her complexion by means of cocktails, liqueurs, the stuffiness of shops and restaurants, and late nights. The said young woman, between the hours of 6 and 8 p.m., will put all her brains into the enterprise of maintaining her good looks and her youthful-

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ness, and between the hours of 8 p.m. and 2 a.m. will do five times as much harm to her looks and youthfulness as she did good in the previous two hours. The golfer acts similarly. If he was the monument of sagacity he thinks he is, he would eat less, drink less, smoke less, and keep his health good all the week instead of damaging it on six days and trying, often too violently, to restore it on the seventh.

Of course the golfer can give another reason for his game: it relieves his mind, distracts it, compels it to shift away for a time from worrying cares. Here is an excellent reason, and it touches one of the chief justifications of any game. But even this is not the golfer's real reason for golfing.

The real reason is that he takes pleasure in the game, and in the companionship and surroundings of the game. It passes the time in a pleasurable manner. The golfer likes to pit his skill and strength (such as they are) against the skill and strength of his friends. He enjoys the rivalry, the emulation, the struggle, the victories.

There is, in fact, no moral or remedial or therapeutic aim in the golfer's golfing. Golf may be healthful, but even if it were not—

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and in some cases it assuredly is not—the golfer would still golf; bridge-playing cannot be esteemed physically healthful, but bridge-players will still play bridge—because they like it. The supreme value of a game lies in the fact that, by giving pleasure to the player, it increases his vitality, inspires him to live more fully.

It may do other things, but these other things are rather beside the point. Only people, especially Anglo-Saxons, are so afraid lest joyfulness may somehow be reprehensible that they will never admit it as a lawful and laudable end in itself. They must needs wrap it up in insincere babble about bodily and mental health. Conversely, if a man plays a game simply because it is “good for him,” then be sure that it is not “good” for him. If he is not pleasurable interested in it, it lacks, for him, what should be its prime quality. There are, I know, men to whom their doctors prescribe some medicine and some golf. And they take the golf as they take the medicine—and hope to derive benefit therefrom !



Many busy men try, and fail, to find time for one of the great outdoor games, and thus they

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play no game at all ; whereas, if they had been content with inferior games demanding less time and trouble, they might have obtained some very agreeable and useful diversion.

Indoor games have innumerable advantages. They need little arranging in advance. They need little apparatus. They are cheap—unless you gamble high. They can be played at any time. Sunset stops golf. But bridge, billiards, and ping-pong are perfectly independent of solar phenomena. Indoor games can be taken up and dropped. They do not leave you in a condition unfit for civilised society. There is no necessity to strip and rub down after a game of chess or Miss Milligan. And perhaps the supreme advantage of indoor games is that they rarely enslave the player ; though bridge, I admit, cannot claim this advantage. Bridge, once yielded to, is a worse tyrant than whisky, and has most seriously damaged the moral worth of millions of its victims—I say nothing of their pockets. The man who invented bridge should be classed with the arch-criminals of the ages. But it is a fine game.

IN SPAIN :

ENTRY INTO SPAIN

THE Pyrenees and the Catholic Church are still the two defenders of Spain against the assaults of modernity. I can speak freely of the Pyrenees, which are under-estimated in the popular mind. Few people realise that in addition to stretching unbroken from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean the Pyrenees are in places over a hundred miles deep, and perhaps never less than eighty.

Not a single railway has either surmounted or tunnelled them. The international sleeping-cars slide furtively around between them and the sea at either coast, and there is just room and no more. When at Irun (the Atlantic frontier station) you have the feeling of having somehow "got in."

Irun has a romantic sound. Stand in the vast, deserted spaces of the midnight station and see the high houses about you, lit in their upper storeys, and wonder if the bedrooms are as romantically primitive as the Spanish legend. Well, they must be. The bar in the refreshment-room is directed by a plump,

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dignified, and mysterious woman copied from Goya. Notice the pointed nose and the descending nostrils. The bookstall is directed by her twin-sister in nature.

You buy the Madrid newspapers, thirty-six hours old. And the first thing you observe is the "Religious Diary," an important daily feature, giving the names of the numerous saints of the day. And the second thing you observe is a notice that the paper has been duly passed by the military censorship. (Yes, and before you get to Madrid you meet military hospital trains.)

Inside the large refreshment-room, all among the bottles and tumblers, two men are playing a sort of simplified fives with a child's bouncing ball. Ah! Basque ball-games! Pelota! Iberia! But hardly have you come to a profound conclusion about the irrepressibility of national character when you perceive that one of the players is an Englishman, and that he is ruling the game. Presently the game is transferred to the platform, and chairs are installed for cheering spectators. . . . It ceases. The train, as unassumingly as a thief in the night, slips away into the high bosom of Spain.



THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME

Every one is aware that there are no castles in Spain. Nevertheless, the first thing I saw by daylight in Spain was a castle with turreted tower and all—at Medina del Campo, the junction for Lisbon. And the next was a walled town with about a hundred little castles in its walls—Avila, a city which seemed to have been flung down on the mountain-side, complete and perfect, by some god of war, centuries ago. Thus does rumour lie.

The railway runs high among mountains for hundreds of miles, crossing torrents and penetrating pine forests and avoiding the snowline, until it descends into Madrid—and Madrid itself is half a mile above sea-level! Prodigious landscapes, immeasurable distances, deep blues and greens, the browns of raw earth, masses of tumbled granite, white-headed sierras painted on the pale sky; savage, grim, and lovely! Scarcely a town, scarcely a village! The rare human beings match the scene.



See a group of powerful workmen on a goods wagon, each with a thick scarf thrown picturesquely round his barbaric neck against the keen wind. They watch the international

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sleeping-cars crawl slowly past their wagon. Not a movement, not a sound — Spanish phlegm. Then a sudden ribald roar of laughter : they have glimpsed a woman alone in her compartment. That marks the stage of civilisation which the populace has reached in the sheltering arms of the Church behind the Pyrenees.

At any rate, the trifling episode accorded with what one had heard and read of Spain, and therein it was remarkable. For one was often surprised at the variation between rumour and the fact. If I had been sure of anything concerning Spain it was that Madrid lay in a huge, arid, and infertile plain. But my eyes told me that the plain was cultivated and fertile and full of wells. A tremendous expanse of cornland. Through forty miles I saw little but farms stretching away on both hands and in front endlessly. Enigmatic farming, but farming. A slatternly village about every ten miles ; a vile road sprawled over by mule teams ; a few mules in the hedgeless fields here and there dragging some primitive implement to tickle the earth's skin ; not a farmhouse, and incredibly few labourers.

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But in the solitudes the stuff was growing ; the land was yielding riches, and on a terrific scale. Somebody was acquiring immense wealth, though nearly every creature seen wore tatters. The spectacle of mighty productiveness extending unbroken to the far sierras was overwhelming. Madrid, the restless capital of a great nation, was diminished to a speck, to an accident, to something transient and absurd, in the midst of all this ageless and infinite agriculture.

Madrid lacks character. It is not even Oriental, as Great Spain is. Like all the smaller capitals, it imitates Paris ; it has boulevards, parks, vistas, academies, museums (including the Prado—one of the most dazzling in the whole world), grand hotels, rich apartment houses, palaces. But it is without character. Its Bond Street is as negative as a Chippendale and Adam drawing-room in the West End. It looks as if the municipal authorities had gone to the Army and Navy Stores and said, “Have you any principal shopping streets in stock—Continental style ?” and the A. and N.S. had replied, “Yes, we have a good line in principal shopping streets

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—suitable for the Continent,” and the municipal authorities had purchased one ready made.

The famous *Puerta del Sol*, the radiating centre of the city, is small, shapeless, and unimpressive ; and none of the streets which come out of it has any absolute importance. There are no large glittering cafés or restaurants anywhere, no mighty shops, no dominating banks, no dominating churches ; the post office alone shows architectural ambition—but it is away on a boulevard.

The narrow thoroughfares, lined with paltry shops, are jammed with vehicles, and since every chauffeur toots his horn continuously in order to demonstrate that he belongs to the high caste of chauffeurs, the entire place is a nerve-racking hell of small squeaks. The narrow pavements are almost impassable with undirected throngs of thousands upon thousands of plain persons living simple lives, as to whom it may be asserted that only the women—and only a trifling portion of the women—bear the Spanish mark.

Many of the women walk well ; many of them combine dignity with grace ; and some (well dressed and with refinement in their dark faces) strike a piquant Moorish note by wearing

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a mantilla but no hat. The contents of the shop windows are unattractive and comparatively expensive, and arranged without taste. Half of them seem to come from England and the other half from Germany. The shop windows are indeed a proof that Great Spain is an agricultural country, and not an industrial one.



One building in the centre of the city stands out—the Palacio del Congreso, the Spanish House of Commons. It is closed, by command of the military dictatorship, and the singular lamps suspended on its windows are never lighted. Deputies and former deputies are forbidden to enter on any pretence; but the stranger can illegally invade it at the cost of a small bribe, and see the pictures illustrating some of the intense excitements of modern Spanish history, and the too numerous memorials to deputies who have met death in the making of that history. The bribe is symptomatic of the colossal corruption which ruined Russia and is strangling Spain. And a few patriotic and ardently religious Generals are naively trying to cure it by suppressing liberty! We passed a huge barracks. My companion said :

IN SPAIN : HOLY WEEK

“ There is the Government of Spain ! ”

And there surely it was ! But the jostling little people in the little streets go on naturally living in the persuasion that there is no city like Madrid. And pristine agriculture with laborious dignity proceeds on the measureless uplands, ignoring both fussy town-dwellers and earnest, right-thinking dictators.

HOLY WEEK

Imagine a platform or dray about seven by fourteen feet, supported on four thick legs about four feet high. Imagine from twenty-five to forty men crouching in rows beneath this platform and deprived of air and light by black draperies which hang round the dray. Friends pass cigarettes and water to these galley-slaves. A sharp rat-a-tat is heard on the wood of the platform.

A pause. Then a single imperious knock : and the whole dray rises a foot from the ground. It is being borne on the bent shoulders and heads of the prisoners. You can see their feet moving in very short steps under the heavy load. They stagger forward for a hundred yards, two hundred

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yards, and then drop the platform. More cigarettes and water. They start again. And so on.

This is the human foundation of the great processions of the ecclesiastical lay brotherhoods which are the chief feature of Holy Week in Seville. For the drays are gilt or silvered or ornamented in solid silver : they have pillars and canopies and scores of candles, and in the midst are life-size images of the Virgin, Jesus, or tableaux with as many as ten figures of scenes in the life of Jesus.

The Virgins are clad and jewelled with dazzling splendour, and the other images scarcely less so. The cost of everything is advertised, and we learn that the value of the contents of one dray alone—"The Crowning with Thorns"—falls just short of a million pesetas (over £30,000). There are twenty-five brotherhoods, and some of them have more than one dray. Night after night the men-borne drays of illumined images are processionally displayed to the public in ever-increasing glory and profusion. On Holy Thursday the show begins at 6 p.m., and it ends about 6 a.m. on Good Friday.

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You have a "box" in one of the grand brocaded stands in Constitution Square, with the ornate façade of the town hall behind you. The mayor's box is a mass of red velvet. The mayor wears an ordinary silk hat. All the windows of all the pale houses are full of sightseers. Half the width of the street is set with chairs for sightseers, leaving a lane for the procession. Behind the chairs are packed thousands of sightseers.

Electric sky-signs are flickering. Everywhere are advertisements of lamps, lubricating oils, *apéritifs*, Ford cars. Hawkers wander about shouting the virtues of pea-nuts under the dark blue sky. The procession approaches : black or white or violet-clad men hooded in high conical hoods like candle-extinguishers, with two holes for eyesight ; each man carrying an enormous flickering candle. Then a band, either on foot or on horseback—an ordinary band, a band of drums or a band of buglers. The performance of the mounted buglers excites applause by its brilliance. A member of the crowd bursts into exotic, ecstatic song. Incense is soaring into the air.

Then in the distance a radiance, and round the corner comes a gilded glittering dray. A

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Virgin shakes solitary behind a hundred tall candles. Her mantle stretches right from her shoulders over the back of the dray to the ground, and is worth 30,000 pesetas. The real jewels on her hands are worth another 20,000 pesetas. As the dray gets nearer all the spectators rise and the men uncover, and as it moves away all the spectators sit and the men cover, so that for dray after dray there is a continuous, very slow, wave-like movement of the crowd.

The dray sinks and stops. The slaves beneath it are drinking and smoking and taking breath. A sharp knock, and the dray rises and tremblingly advances. More men in high conical hoods, carrying candles ! More bands ! Occasionally a parochial symbol, lifted high ! More drays ! More candle-carriers ! More bands ! The several processions have started from their several parish churches. Their destination is the cathedral, from which they will pass back again to their churches.



Now you are in the Cathedral, incomparably the greatest monument in the city : immense, arched as high as heaven, chaste—for the carved and painted high altar is curtained in

IN SPAIN : HOLY WEEK

sign that Christ is not yet risen. You sit behind the formidable iron railings of a chapel, opposite the choir and the orchestra : the vast organ may not be used, but operatic singers and instrumentalists may bring to Seville the prestige of the royal opera from Madrid ! And the price of your wicker chairs is the price of stalls at that opera.

Thousands, tens of thousands of people in the Cathedral, and thousands more entering ! It is said fifty thousand, but perhaps twenty. The brotherhood processions of extinguished men and drays come everlastingly in, beneath the electric lights as remote as stars in the summits of the groined arches. Jesus after Jesus, Mary after Mary, pass trembling and shaking on their drays and amid their innumerable candles across the front of the sheeted high altar, and are parked away in the distances of the fane. And these images, ill-designed but gloriously clothed, have the air of being wearier and more shaken even than the hidden sweating creatures who bear them along : yet they have many bored miles to travel before Good Friday dawn will break on the yawning streets and spectators of Seville.

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Singing is heard here and there; babies crying; the hum of chatter. The clock strikes eleven, and on the very instant the clerical conductor raises his hand, the *Miserere* of Enslava (the local composer) begins, and the admirable tenor voice of the darling of Madrid easily fills and dominates the echoing spaces. Trivial, old-fashioned music, reducing the terrible words of the *Miserere* to almost naught! The trained boys make a distressing exhibition; the men are a little better, the orchestra is a little better still; but only the tenor is worthy of the night.



Chatter increases, and the few devout try vainly with hisses to suppress it. Babies cry again. Crowds have not ceased to surge inwards. The press is terrific. Nevertheless way is made through it for a procession of distinguished men and of crosses, and for another procession of medalled military officers. The crush becomes dangerous, and you are glad that railings two inches thick separate you from it.

Panic hovers near, and death not much farther off. The *Miserere* goes steadily on. The noise of the alarmed victims of the crush

IN SPAIN : HOLY WEEK

grows peculiar. Human beings are on the very verge of being transferred into raging beasts. A trifle may decide the issue. But the calmness and the courtesy which apparently distinguish all the citizens of this city prevail at last. Panic slowly retreats. . . . The clock strikes twelve, and in the same instant the *Miserere* closes.



You are out in the thoroughfares, which are beginning to have the aspect of a *kermess*, in merciless anticipation of the passage of more Christs, more Marys, more Josephs, more Pontius Pilates, more Roman soldiers—images suffocating among their inexhaustible and gigantic candles. You might suppose that the populace would be sick of the eternal iteration. Not at all. The effect of the processions seems to grow on these Spaniards, who care neither for the past nor for the future, and who love chiefly cigarettes, women, and slothful monotony.

So it all continues until Easter morning, when in a final crisis of ceremonial the rending of the curtain before the high altar and the din of all the bells in the city announce that Christ is risen and that the tortured images of wandering Jews are at liberty to rest for a year.

THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME

TOLEDO

Toledo is one of the most romantic names in Europe, and one of the oldest. It was a tremendous city under the Moors, and nearly a thousand years have passed since the Christians took it from the Moors and put a new face on it, and nearly five hundred years have passed since the Moorish language was finally stamped out. During the epoch when Roman Catholicism ruled the civilisation of Europe and Spain ruled Roman Catholicism, the headquarters of Spanish Roman Catholicism were at Toledo, whose archbishops had a habit of being the most powerful persons of their times. Even the insular and rebellious English are familiar with the influence and the doings of the great Toledan archbishops, such as Ximenes, Mendoza, and Rodrigos.

They did what they liked. They took everything to themselves. They altered the city to suit themselves. They had enormous revenues. They organised their own armies and Inquisition, and they organised art and artists, and when they desired to build monasteries and colleges they pulled down other people's houses and just built them. It was

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the golden age of the true faith. But unhappily the prelates went too far. That arrogant sovereign Philip II. tolerated their clerical swagger until he could tolerate it no more, whereupon he moved his court to Madrid.



Then Toledo went into a consumption. Its population was 200,000 ; it is now 20,000, while Madrid is over half a million. Nevertheless, Toledo in a way still governs Spain, for Spain is governed by a military dictatorship, and the dictators are all unimpeachably good Catholics and subject to their confessors, and the Cardinal-Archbishop of Toledo is still the Primate of all Spain—the head of its religious politics.

Such was the city that I went forth in an American motor-car to witness. The mere map of Toledo is intensely romantic. You see on it the River Tagus (on its journey to Lisbon and the Atlantic) winding deeply almost right around the city. And the city is on a mountain, and there are mountains all about, save on the north, where lies the vast Castilian upland. On every side except one the most influential hill in Christian Europe slopes impassably down into the Tagus ; and the summit of the hill is dominated by two

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enormous buildings—the Cathedral and the Alcazar. The spectacle is so wonderful, so ideally like what your imagination says it ought to be, that you can scarcely believe it. However, it is real enough.

Only the disturbing thing is the smallness of the scale. I estimated that the total area of the city does not exceed half a square mile. In this absurdly trifling space, not merely was the manufacture of steel brought to its last perfection, not only did the Inquisition flourish in its deadliest blossom, but the civilised world was browbeaten and moulded for centuries.



The celebrated Zocodover, nearest approach to a market square in the city, is a miserable triangle smaller than The World's End, Chelsea. All the streets curve and rise and fall continuously, according to the irregular formation of the hilltop, and all of them, without exception, are narrow.

The principal shopping street cannot hold two vehicles abreast ; hence its two ends are made to communicate by two electric bells and two policemen. The entry of a vehicle at one end is signalled at once to the other. Mule teams often comprise six mules, and if six mules

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and a Ford car were to meet in the centre of the street they would certainly perish there together.

Many streets will hold nothing wider than a mule. Many can only be climbed by mules and natives. All the architecture is picturesque and much of it is beautiful. All is as it was. And you may even meet a traditional lovely *señorita* in charge of a traditional ugly duenna, and the *señorita* will traditionally turn to glance at you for the hundredth of a second as she enters the abode which is her prison.

Lovely *señoritas*, however, do not abound. Black-robed, imperfectly shaved priests do. Toledo is the city of priests—and of youthful seminarists. You will not walk a hundred yards without meeting the black robe—mysterious, sinister emblem of the mighty, tenacious, ruthless, unscrupulous—yes, and admirable power which has shaped so much history, and shaped some of it well. The omnipresence of priests and their pupils incommodes and menaces the mind. All the important buildings (save one) are either churches or the creations of the Church. Nothing else counts in Toledo.



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And the greatest edifice of all is the Cathedral—nearly four hundred feet over all, and so big and so hemmed in that its bigness cannot be appreciated at a distance of less than a couple of miles. I was examining the carvings in the vast twilit choir when whole cohorts of surpliced men and boys invaded it, some of them running, and set up an unaccompanied chant so barbaric in tone and yet so complex in musical structure that I fled afraid. Priests among them, and unnumbered priests and acolytes and sombre officials everywhere! They seemed to move to and fro in droves in the eternal dusk of the fane. They were chiefly fat. I had the idea, doubtless an illusion, that seven services were proceeding simultaneously.

Nothing lacked (except the congregation) to the splendour of the incredible organism. Railings of solid silver, statuary worth millions of pesetas, paintings worth millions of pesetas, every dome peopled with climbing carved saints, and gorgeously frescoed with others in undimmed tints. The place took more than two hundred and fifty years to build and twice that time to embellish; and its improvement is still going on.

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The climax of the visitor's sensations occurs in the Treasury, where incalculable riches are watched over and praised by various grades of priesthood, who obviously revel in the wealth which is both theirs and not theirs. There must be a ton and a half of pure gold in that room blazing with electric light. Rubies, sapphires, emeralds as large as shillings. Eighteen thousand genuine pearls on the mantle of a single Madonna ! And so on. Never were the principles of the author of the Sermon on the Mount more grandiosely practised by His avowed disciples !



I said that all the important buildings in Toledo save one were churches or of the Church. The exception is the Alcazar. The Alcazar challenges the Cathedral itself. It is now a military training-school. I saw hundreds of the cadets returning to their Alma Mater for lunch. They were very young and very proud and very smart—far smarter than the soldiers who come home periodically from Morocco on stretchers in hospital trains.

Their uniforms had cost a lot of money, and were scarcely dusty after the morning lesson in the arts of war beyond the boundaries of the

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city. Set these embryo soldiers, who were little boys in the long-forgotten Great War, side by side with the seminarists in the narrow streets of Toledo, and you have a conspectus of the ideals of the impassioned men who are for the moment in charge of Great Spain.

THE SPANIARD

In a city like Seville you can walk through scores of narrow streets of apparently mean houses, and see through locked grilles of lace-like forged iron picturesque marble-paved courtyards where family life is carried on during much of the year. You would like to participate in it, to understand it, but the grille prevents you ; and the grille is the symbol of another less material grille which divides you from the mentality of the semi-Occidental and semi-Oriental native. Spain is a riddle, but every country is a riddle : every country is a congeries of contradictions ; and every country is picturesque. In my opinion the slums of Liverpool and New York Broadway are just as picturesque as a street in Seville—if you know how to look at them ! “ Picturesque ” generally means merely the unusual. The court-

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yards or patios of Seville are not proofs of taste in the inhabitants. If they abound in marble it is because marble happens to be plentiful ; as for their furnishing, it is as vulgar and tasteless as the furnishing of the majority of the churches.

But the riddle ! The riddle is that Spain is a country full of potential riches—which riches are not exploited. The whole country is admittedly “backward,” and it is backward not only in the hard Anglo-Saxon sense, but in every sense. You cannot attribute this state of affairs to the climate, because there are quite seven climates in Spain. Also, with the same climates, Spain was more efficient and productive under the Romans and under the Moors than it has been since.



And the Spaniard has virtues. History shows that he is treacherous and cruel ; but all history overflows with treachery and cruelty, and Spanish history certainly does not show that the Spaniard is more treacherous and cruel than the Frenchman or the Italian. Moreover, treachery and cruelty have never been a bar to efficiency. The Spaniard is proud, he lives miles above snobbery ; but

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neither has pride ever been a bar to efficiency. The Spaniard is conspicuously courteous, and courtesy is the lubricating oil of efficiency. The Spaniard is tenacious and brave. If Cortes had been an Englishman, his astounding, almost unique, feat of conquering the mighty Aztec Empire with a few hundred men, despite the secret opposition and greed of the home authorities, would have blazed a hundred times more brightly in the panorama of the ages than it in fact does. We talk disdainfully of the Spanish Armada ; but I doubt if any English national hero was the equal of Cortes in the qualities which we admire.



The Spaniard is superstitious ; but is he more superstitious, or more under the sway of priestcraft, than were the English in the highly prosperous nineteenth century ? That he is religious I doubt. I saw extremely few signs of devotion during Holy Week in Seville ; and none at all in the Cathedral, where officials had to compel with threats an unwilling populace to kneel at the passage of a holy relic. It is said that the Spaniard is idle. I don't know, but I think of the thousands of Englishmen, who, working at most five days a week, spend

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on their working days two hours over lunch, and inveigh against the British—not the Spanish—plumber.

Lastly, it is said that the Spaniard cannot organise. A ridiculous statement! For the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, run by Spaniards, is a marvellous example of thorough and masterly organisation. The Spanish Church has displayed such psychological expertness in the exploitation of human nature that even to-day a Spanish widow will pay for half a page in a newspaper to inform the world about the prospects of the soul of her departed husband. This is a triumph. I have heard hard things said of the Spanish Church. As, for example, that for showmanship it has the late P. T. Barnum and the present Charles B. Cochran beaten. Well, it has. But are there not Episcopalians and others in New York and Boston who can match it? The influence of the Church in Spain, as elsewhere, is and must be in most respects reactionary and in favour of ignorance as against knowledge. But that, on the other hand, it must in certain ways exercise a good and a civilising influence could surely not be denied by the judicious.



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We come to the Government. The Government of Spain is bad ; it is thoroughly bad, and has been for centuries. And it is particularly bad at the present time, because it has reverted to autocracy and militarism, which two ideals are engaged, with the alleged help of the Church, in a comic sham-fight against a third ideal—corrupt bureaucracy. There is not the slightest chance of the last being defeated. But in the meantime Spain is under martial law. Try to book a good box for the greatest bull-fight of the year four days before it takes place, and you can't. The military have the first choice of the good boxes till then ! Try to cable an account of a murderous crime in a railway train to a London daily. The military stop the cable, for the sake of the fair fame of Spain ! See the blank spaces in the newspapers, from which the military have cut out unpleasant news about the Moroccan war ! Talk about the dictatorship in an ordinary voice in a public place, and your listener will suggest that you whisper. And so on.

Now the public which in 1924 will stand this kind of thing merits this kind of thing. The proverb that a nation gets the government

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it deserves was never truer than to-day. In Spain there is a nation, but, in the English sense of the word, is there a public ? See the best clubs in Seville. (And you can see them easily ; you can't help seeing them, for they proudly exhibit their contents to the world, and a proportion of the members even sit out on the pavement in special arm-chairs.) The members are obviously well-to-do and of importance in the city. Are any of them reading any of the four or five Sevillian dailies ? Scarcely one. They chat, but about what ? I do not know. But if they dislike the Governments under which they live, why do they not cut at the roots of the Governmental inefficiency, which are bribery, nepotism, and general corruption ?



They do nothing, or if they do anything they do it in the wrong way, because the Spaniard is without political sense. The average Spaniard is simple enough to believe that he can gain more advantage by ministering for his own ends to official corruption than by refusing to minister to it. If there were no corrupters there would be no corrupted, and the Government would become clean, and

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therefore relatively efficient. Naturally, the Church might give its weight to a campaign of cleansing; but the Church is and will be always in favour of the *status quo*. When, if ever, any genuine reform is accomplished in Spain it will be accomplished in defiance of the Church, for the reason that the Church is bound up with existing authority. Perhaps the origin of the existing mess lies deeper than anything I have suggested. Perhaps it lies in the fact that the average Spaniard has few and simple wants, and so long as these are satisfied he will keep quiet. He may have vague desires for other matters, but such desires in him are too weak and too transitory to be effective.

THE BULL-FIGHT

The great bull-fight of the year: Seville, Easter Sunday, 5 p.m. I had never seen a bull-fight, and I attended this one with a mind as open as many years of conscientiously objective fiction can make a mind.

The bull-ring is a huge and magnificent specimen of eighteenth-century architecture, with a beautifully tiled and ornamented border

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of roof, and awnings lashed to iron girders rising above the roof ; also the Giralda Tower rising above the roof in the distance. The vast ring itself is smoothly covered with tawny sand. Fourteen thousand spectators in ascending tiers surround the ring (" house full "), and the best seats are near the top. The whole of the ring and more than half of the spectators are exposed to the blazing sunshine, and the flutter of fans sounds like a flight of countless birds.



Despite the sun's extravagant brilliance the scene is not gay. There are very few women—perhaps not 5 per cent. of the audience. Few of the women wear mantillas, and fewer still white mantillas (those who do are chiefly Anglo-Saxon) ; and exceedingly few shawls are hung over the rails of the boxes. The spectacle is in itself as sombre as that of a Cup final and not a quarter as big (but it is more impressive even than the Stadium).

No time is lost, for at bull-fights the Spaniard has a great notion of time. At 4.55 the band plays—it is a band worthy of a travelling circus. At 5 o'clock the pig-tailed procession of toreadors (general term for all the fighters) marches in—the espadas or matadors (the killers) in

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gold vests with broad gold stripe on pants, the picadors (on horseback with lances), and the banderilleros (dart implanters). The ceremonial obeisances to the president are over in a moment, and the next moment the bull rushes bewildered into the ring. The bull is a superb animal, with every sign of power ; he should be five years of age and should weigh over half a ton.

The scene now coincides with one's prevision of it. The splendour of the costumes, the dazzle of the sunshine, the terrible grace of the bull, the cries of the crowd, and the beating of one's heart ! But the famous cloaks are not red ; they are a sort of magenta or deep pink. The toreadors trail these cloaks in front of the bull, whose attentions are sadly divided. Then a bugle screams and the picadors take a turn. The turn of the picador consists in simply offering his horse broadside on to the bull's attack. The bull astonishingly lifts horse and man into the air. The picador may jump off or he may fall off ; sometimes he rebounds like a ship in a collision, and there is a dreadful mix-up of bull, horse, rider, and confusing pink cloaks. At 5.4 a horse is killed. At 5.8 another horse is killed. Then the banderilleros

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begin. They hold darts with two-foot coloured handles in either hand, and flaunt them at the bull, who springs angrily forward ; the man swerves, and lo ! two darts are sticking into the bull's back, then two more, and two more. The bull wears these darts till the end. Then the matador begins. The matador has a red (not pink) cloth, with one side of it threaded on to a stick, and a long, narrow sword. He "plays" the bull with the cloth, and then you see him take aim with the sword just as if the sword were a gun. He must plunge in the sword at a given spot and in a given direction, and either the bull falls dead or the matador falls dead. This is your idea, but it is not borne out by the facts. The matador aims badly, he misses—more than once : the sword may stick or it may fly out. There is no death. Another sword is produced, and another. The thrill is lost. You feel that you are being cheated. At last the matador aims well, and the dazed and exhausted bull does fall dead. 5.18. At five he had been a live bull and one of God's creatures. Caparisoned mules, three abreast, rush in at a gallop and drag out at a gallop first the dead bull and then the dead horses. At 5.21 the second bull is in the ring.

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At 7.15 the whole of the arena is in shadow. Somewhere out of sight lie the carcasses of eight bulls and twenty horses. A horse every seven minutes ; a bull every seventeen minutes ! The festival is done.



What are one's impressions ? The first is monotony, even boredom. I would not go out of my way to see another bull-fight. The second is the stupidity of the bull. If the bull had the sense to attack the man and not the cloak, and to stick to one target, he would empty the ring in five minutes, and revolvers would have to be used to finish him. The bull may be superb, but he is an ass. The third impression is the clumsiness of most of the swordsmanship. The fourth is the beauty, skill, and danger of some of the cloak play at close quarters. That real danger exists is proved by the fact that four matadors were killed last year. Most of the cloak play, however, is not dangerous. Indeed, on this very afternoon a spectator (not young) in grey clothes with a bit of grey cloth jumped into the arena and played the first bull with success until the police got him. He was taken to prison.



IN SPAIN : THE BULL-FIGHT

The cruelty ? Well, I have not described the blood—and other things. Nor shall I do so. I had absolutely no feeling of physical nausea ; but then I was probably three hundred feet away from the nearest sanguinary events, whereas if I described them you would be reading about them at a distance of one foot. The chief contested point of cruelty relates to the horses. The horses have no chance. They are deliberately offered to the bull's horns. They are very old and bound soon to be slaughtered ; they appear to be doped ; they do not appear to suffer, though the most astonishing things happen to them ; most of those who die, die in a moment. Why horses at all ? The official answer is that the tossing of them fatigues the bull. It may be so ; but I should say that, in addition to the horses being offered to the bull, the spectacle of the murder of the horses is offered to the crowd. The show in its entirety, while in some aspects beautiful and affording opportunities for high courage and very fine skill, is disgusting, brutalising, and in large part tedious. I fully admit that it must be less tedious to experts, but often the crowd on Easter Sunday was obviously bored.

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I share the Spanish view that "sporting" Englishmen have no right to protest against the cruelty of bull-fights. Horses, and finer horses and far more sensitive horses, suffer more, both morally and physically, at a Grand National than at a bull-fight. See the fallen with broken limbs, waiting—how long?—for death. Consider the little fox pursued by a mob of dogs, horses, and men. The fox has a "chance"? Hypocritical nonsense! The conditions are arrayed against the fox, without the approval of the fox, who objects strongly to the whole business. At least there is danger in facing a bull. There is none (save from your own clumsiness or your horse's) in running after a fox. And consider the case of the sportsman who, after a happy day spent in killing fifty brace of defenceless birds, specially bred for slaughter, comes home and announces that a bull-fight is cruel. The attitude would be odious were it not comic.

THE GREATEST MOMENT

OF course there are sensational moments in life particulars of which only a very communicative man will communicate to the world. Apart from such moments, I cannot recall that either before the war or after the war I experienced any thrills worth mentioning. But during the war a few thrills came my way.

As representative of the War Office, I had charge of the civil organisation for moving the entire population in case of need out of a certain area where the War Office believed the Germans would land—if they did land. I was talking to a considerable officer one night when he said to me gloomily :

“Why don’t our aeroplanes destroy Essen ? I will tell you. Because Asquith has shares in Krupps, and won’t allow it.”

It thrilled me to think how easily we should win the war under the direction of such master-minds as this one.

I had another and a different thrill when I was summoned by a Cabinet minister to a meeting of distinguished authors who were to help in putting Britain’s case persuasively

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before the whole world—and especially America. I there learnt that very distinguished authors had been patriotically sending gratis articles to America and having them refused by very distinguished American editors. I thought that this difficulty might be overcome. I wrote an article stating the British case, and said :

“The price of this stuff is £300.”

It was at once bought and printed. I wrote more and lengthier stuff, about our armies, and said :

“The price of this stuff is £1800.”

It was at once bought and printed. The editors were pleased. The British Government was pleased. And so was I. A great moment for the last-named !



In the last year of the war I was summoned to the Ministry of Information and asked to sit in it and take charge of all British propaganda for France. The Minister told me that I understood the psychology of the French. I did not deny it. He also said :

“Whatever you do, I will back you.”

He did.

I had always had a passion for organisation.

THE GREATEST MOMENT

I now gratified the passion. Next to running a great hotel, this business seemed to me to be the most sensational that any human being could indulge in. I could contradict and withstand ambassadors, and did.

But soon afterwards I had a fright, the most terrible of my life. I was told :

“ The Minister is very ill, and will resign. No new Minister is to be appointed at present, but you will be put in charge of the Ministry, with supreme responsibility.”

Imagine a wayward novelist, with no experience of bureaucratic methods, having dominion over hundreds of exalted persons, including Bank directors, railway directors, historians, K.C.'s, heads of trusts, poets, and generals ! You cannot. At least I could not. I told a Minister that I could not sleep for responsibility. He said :

“ You will get used to it.”

The strange thing is that I did.

Great and awful days ! What tales I could tell of rival Ministries fighting one another quite as tenaciously as the Allied armies fought the German armies—and with far more bitterness. A friend of mine in the War Office told me that an order had been issued forbidding

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any member of his section, under any pretext whatever, to enter my Ministry.

Still, when I visited the War Office, even the mightiest swells had to see me. Which was something.

I had a few Generals of my own. I remember the first time I rang the bell and said to one of my secretaries :

“ Ask General X if he will be good enough to come and see me at once.”

And General X came and was received in audience. A great moment for a novelist ! But if you think that it was the greatest of all, you are mistaken. My Generals, I ought to say, were charming and unbureaucratic men, and I had no sort of grievance against them. Nevertheless they were generals, and in summoning them I felt that I was doing something to redress the balance on behalf of all privates, and all officers from Colonels downwards, in all the British armies.



The greatest moment of all, the moment when I knew that my life had touched its climax, was in November 1918, when my principal secretary came into my room and said :

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“Fellows at the War Office are continually ringing me up to know whether the Armistice has been signed.”

“Don’t tell them,” said I. (Not that we knew.)

Such was the co-ordination of Ministries in the war that I got my first news of the Armistice from a newsboy in Regent Street at 10.45 a.m. on 11th November. Everybody knew at eleven o’clock. I returned to my Ministry, the staff of which was highly excited and even hysterical, particularly the women. I affected nonchalance, and urged the women to remain calm. But perhaps this moment was the supremely great one for me, after all. I was free.

SPENDING AN INCOME

DESPITE the advancing strides of science, a few mysteries remain in this our earthly life. One of the most remarkable of them lies in the different results obtained by possessors of the same or similar incomes. The dustman has the spending of as large an income as the decent clerk whose refuse he carries away of a morning. Yet the clerk lives in better surroundings, is dressed better both when at work and when not at work, brings up his children better, has better furniture and more comfort, than the dustman.

And the dustman provides by no means an outstanding example of the curious relative discrepancy between income and the fruits thereof in well-being. There are a very large number of artisans who handle from three to five hundred a year. There are some who make a thousand a year—and spend all of it, or at any rate nearly all of it. A thousand a year is a good salary for a middle-aged Civil servant, with thirty years' service behind him. It is a very good salary for the managing clerk of a big firm of solicitors, who works long hours and has endless responsibility. It

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is an astonishing salary for a branch bank manager.

Yet compare the conditions of the family of the star-artisan with those of the families of the Civil servant, the lawyer, the banker. The latter send their children to schools of recognised standing, they are well dressed and their women are well dressed ; they keep a servant or servants ; they sit in reserved seats in theatres ; they go for a regular holiday ; they belong to clubs ; they even buy or hire books. Their success in the art of daily living is out of sight, immeasurably, superior to the artisan's. How do they achieve it ? How does the artisan not achieve it ? It is the second of these two questions which at the moment is the most interesting.

Before examining it I must make quite clear that I am not assuming the artisan class to be wallowing in money and to have the freedom to live where it likes and how it likes. There is a large amount of real impecuniosity in the artisan class, and often the restrictions upon its freedom of action (in the matter of residence, for instance) are very severe. All I say is that class for class, and speaking broadly, the artisan class has not been so hard hit as

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the middle class (especially the lower stratum of the middle class), and that despite this the middle class gets better relative results in decency, dignity, and comfort of material living than the artisan class.



In my opinion the British, as a race, have a tendency towards extravagance and waste which is not usually seen in continental peoples. The British understand how to make money, but they do not understand personal and family expenditure. In other words, compared with continental peoples, they do not properly know how to live. This, to my mind, is particularly true of the artisan class. Its truth is well shown whenever the average artisan gets hold of a bit more money than he has been accustomed to. In the years preceding the great general slump of 1920 it was shown again and again in the extraordinary demand by certain prosperous sections of the class for ridiculous and perfectly futile luxuries; and the classic excesses of the miners in the 'seventies, which I witnessed as a child living in a draper's shop in a colliery district, were repeated and perhaps surpassed. (I can distinctly recall a miner coming into the said

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shop and demanding the most expensive cloth obtainable to make a coat for his whippet—and my grandfather angrily refusing to sell it to him !)

The successful artisan too seldom distributes his expenditure with commonsense, for the reason that he does not appreciate what is really important and what is not. And further, if an increase of income happens to him, he does not, as a rule, either save or alter the general curve of his expenditure. Great blobs or excrescences appear on the curve—in the shape sometimes of pianos or gross food and drink or gambling—and the symmetry of the various spending departments of daily existence, always very imperfect, becomes more imperfect than ever.

This lack of due proportion is of course noticeable in the expenditure of some members of other classes. An extreme example of it may be seen in the budget of a rising young actress who has attained the second or third rank, who lives by herself, and whose total income reaches a thousand a year. Her home establishment is of the simplest and modestest, and compares very ill with the home of a fairly prosperous professional family whose total in-

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come is not greater than her own. She lives little at home, but a great deal in public resorts. She possesses practically nothing beyond her clothes, a few jewels, and handbags to match each of her frocks. When she comes into a restaurant she looks opulent, she carelessly flings down rich objects on to the table, and you might be excused for thinking her immensely wealthy; but the fact is that nearly all her possessions are now being displayed. It is a part of her professional business to be always on show and to make a fine appearance. Hence there is a valid excuse for the lopsidedness of her budget, as for many other strange budgets.

But in the family budget of the artisan there can be no excuse for lopsidedness. The last thing he desires is to cut a figure or to be abnormal in any way.



I have referred to the superiority of the continental artisan in the art of living. The French peasant farmer is generally cited in Britain as a model of economical living. But the French of that and similar classes carry economy to the point of exaggeration. They work too hard and they pinch too much, with

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the result that though they live well so far as they try to live, they do not try to live enough. They are martyrs to work and to saving, and have developed ferocious instincts of avarice. I would prefer the example of Austrian or German artisans.

The Englishman is improvident, but my charge against him would be that in spending he does not get a good return, in health and comfort, for his money. To begin with, he does not understand food values, nor take care that his women shall understand food values. It is not merely that his cookery (though now a little improving) counts among the most unappetising and execrable in the civilised world ; it is that his diet is restricted, costly, and wasteful. There are plenty of inexpensive foods that he refuses to touch, simply because he never has touched them. Ask him to try a salad, and see the face he pulls. His beverages are on the plane of his food.

Again, he does not understand beds, in which he passes half his life, nor boots, in which he passes the other half. The French do understand beds, and take a lot of trouble over them. The average English bed seems like a survival of the tortures of the Inquisition.

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As for furniture in general, the amount of money wasted by the working classes in gimcrack and inconvenient sideboards, wardrobes, tables, and uneasy-chairs must be equal to about sixpence of our pleasant income-tax.

As for clothes, and the moral and physical advantages of becoming and hygienic clothes, he recks naught of it. Nor does his wife. (But his daughters are happily teaching him a thing or two.) It is an infinite pity that we have no "national costume" in this island. Think of the ravishing effect of a Dutch milk-girl carrying round the milk of a morning, and consider how a similar phenomenon of dress would add to the amenities of existence in Britain!

As for the artisan's pleasures, he seems to like sitting in the dark at a cinema or in carbonic oxide gas in a public-house bar. But the simpler, healthier, cheaper family joys of the large open café or the beer-garden, with gay music therein, have not yet occurred to him.

It may be said that there is no adequate supply of the above-named two articles. I admit it. But there is no adequate supply because there is no demand. It may also be said that my criticisms would apply in some

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degree to classes above that of the artisan. I admit that too.

One other thing that the artisan might get, if he had a taste for it (as most of his continental contemporaries have), is instruction in right deportment, than which few accomplishments contribute more to the dignity and smoothness of existence and to the best kind of democracy.

The papers are adorned with numberless advertisements of experts who offer to teach the art or craft of earning incomes. But I doubt if I have ever seen the advertisement of an expert who was ready to teach how to spend incomes.

BUYING AND READING BOOKS

THE philosopher said that reading makes a full mind. Not always. And perhaps not even generally. The effect of reading on the mind depends on the manner and spirit in which you read.

Some of the emptiest minds I ever met belonged to certain women who got a book out of the lending library every weekday of their lives—and read it through within the ensuing twenty-four hours. Part of their daily routine was to visit the library to “change the book.” No particular book of a particular author! No remembered title! But just “the book”! I have calculated that such regular and tireless readers would read twenty million words or more in a year. (One might be excused for thinking that they read for a wager or a penance.) Great scholars probably read less than they. Walter Savage Landor, whose knowledge was prodigious and amazing, said that only four years of his life were given up to study, and that even in those years he never allowed reading to interfere with his other pleasures.

And yet these one-day one-book maniacs notoriously have vacant heads.

BUYING AND READING BOOKS

It may be argued that they read the wrong kind of stuff—for instance, “trashy novels.” Well, I am not aware that novels are more trashy than other forms of literature. And all novels are not trashy. A considerable proportion of them are rather good—thought-provoking, sympathy-quickenings, intellectually stimulating. It is indeed impossible that a confirmed reader should read nothing but trash. She simply could not avoid picking up a good novel now and then. Moreover, the one-day one-book maniacs do not confine themselves to novels. They gobble biographies, essays, reminiscences, yea, and historical works at intervals.

So that the explanation of the perfect vacancy of their minds cannot lie in what they read. Hence it must lie in how they read. And it does. The fact is, they read with the minimum of mental effort. They read as they might absorb coffee or chew gum or play patience. They read to lose themselves instead of reading to find themselves. They read to dull the brain and not to vitalise it. They object to being roused. I have heard them protest indignantly :

“ But I couldn’t put the book down. I don’t want any more of that man—he’s too exciting.”

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They have a faint desire to know "what happened," but the desire must not be more than faint. They refuse to yield themselves to their author. Their scheme is to understand him as little as may be. Their scheme is to employ him as a drug.

All which behaviour is highly strange, nearly incredible ; but that large numbers of readers really do behave in this way cannot be doubted, and the phenomenon amounts to a proof that reading does not necessarily make a full mind.



You may say that you are not a student, that when you read you read purely for recreation and for pleasure, and that in this affair you are not "out" for a full mind. You may even assert that your mind is already overburdened.

This seems to me to be quite a permissible attitude. Every man has a right, if he is so inclined, to read purely for recreation, and the majority of persons do in truth read purely for recreation. But when you are in search of recreation you may as well get the best recreation you can. The game of golf is a recreation and nothing else for ninety-nine golfers out of a hundred. But golfers do not play golf anyhow. They do not say :

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“I am golfing for fun, and I have no intention of taking trouble over it. I don’t care a fig about stance, or swing, or eye. I mean to play any old way.”

On the contrary, they usually approach the game with much earnestness. They put their wits into it. They deliberately learn from players better than themselves. They worry about it. They talk endlessly about it. Some of them take it at least as seriously as they take their vocation in life. And they are right, within reason, for the more seriously they play golf the more efficacious and delightful does golf become as a recreation. You cannot get proper recreation out of any activity unless you honestly work at it. If you don’t put your back into it you defeat your own purpose, and are convicted of being absurd. This is just as true of reading as it is of golf.



In reading it is the attitude of the reader that matters more than his intelligence. A reader with the right attitude but with only moderate intelligence is likely to get more out of any book than a reader with better intelligence but with the wrong attitude.

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Let me take *Hamlet*, in order to avoid dispute : nobody will deny that it is something of a work, and that Shakspeare was a passable author. *Hamlet*, to speak fairly, is a vast and extremely complex work, full of powers and beauties both apparent at first sight and half-hidden, shy, obscure. It represents a colossal effort of the brain and the spirit. It has stood for centuries high in esteem, and now perhaps stands higher than ever. It can be read, mechanically, in half a day.

There are individuals of mature years who have never read Shakspeare (yes, millions of them). Some of these people will approach *Hamlet* as though it were the report of a cricket match, with an attitude which might be expressed in the words, "Well, let's have a look at this fellow Shakspeare that people make such a fuss about"; and they will casually go through it, and they will at once pass judgment upon it, saying that no doubt it has points, but that it is diffuse, tedious in places, formless, sanguinary, and undoubtedly depressing.

It never occurs to them to reflect that they have been in the presence of a superior to whom they owe a becoming humility, to whom they ought to submit themselves, and whose achieve-

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ment deserves all the brain-power of which they are capable. It never occurs to them that in lightly approaching an unsurpassed masterpiece, the product of the long and intense labour of an unsurpassed genius, they are making themselves ridiculous. The fact is that they should enter *Hamlet* as they would enter a cathedral, bareheaded and reverent, and with all their faculties astir for the comprehending of it.



Hamlet, of course, is an extreme case, but proportionately a similar argument applies to all books worth examining. It needs a rather clever man to write even a rather ordinary book. Every sincere author has a purpose and he has a method. He begins with certain assumptions, and he is entitled to ask the reader's fullest attention to these. It is the author, not the reader, who chooses the ground upon which the two shall meet. The reader's business is to accept the ground and the methods, and to find out the purpose. It is the reader's business to yield himself, to acquiesce, to open all his pores for the reception of what the author (any author) has to offer ; to be friendly and not inimical, trustful and not suspicious,

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attentive and not negligent, respectful and not condescending. Otherwise he is wasting his time, insulting the author, and making fair criticism impossible. What shall be said of a reader who, when an author admittedly sets out to hold him breathless, resents being held breathless? When the reader has conscientiously done his duty to the author, then, and not before, he may allow himself to give a verdict.



If a reader's position is that he reads to pass the time, it may be answered to him that whether he reads wisely or stupidly he will still pass the time, and that as to read wisely is much more diverting and recreative than to read stupidly, he may just as well read wisely—that is to say, he may just as well read with his full brain as with half his brain.

Of course a given reader, reading with all the honesty of intention of which he is capable, may discover that a book with a great reputation means nothing to him, for not all sincere persons can appreciate all fine books. In that case he should drop the book; he is wasting energy and goodwill upon it, and the sooner he ceases to do so the better. Every con-

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vinced reader leaves behind him numbers of books unfinished.

The success of a book with a reader is to be measured by its effect upon the actual daily existence of the reader. If a book excites thought ; if it stimulates the sense of beauty, the sense of pity, the sense of sympathy ; if it helps in any way towards the understanding of one's fellow-creatures ; if it moves to laughter or to tears ; if it increases the general vitality ; if it throws light on dark problems ; if it discloses the broad principles which govern the movement of humanity ; if it awakens the conscience and thus directly influences personal conduct,—if it accomplishes any of these things, then it has succeeded. If it does none of these things, but rather the opposite of these things, then it has failed.

The aim of reading as a whole is gradually to create an ideal life, a sort of secret, precious life, a refuge, a solace, an eternal source of inspiration, in the soul of the reader. All habitual, impassioned readers are aware of this secret life within them due to books ; it brings about a feeling of security amid the insecurities of the world ; it is like an insurance policy, a

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sound balance at the bank, a lifeboat in a rough sea.



Although some principle in the choice of books for reading is admirable, and is indeed almost certain in the end to establish itself naturally, even if it is not settled in advance, I am not in favour of too much rigidity in this matter. In particular, I do not care for "courses of study." My subject is reading for pleasure, diversion, relaxation. I object to the very ideas in the word "course" and the word "study." They have in them the seeds of the ghastliest of mental afflictions—priggishness. Let the reader read with his whole heart, and he may safely browse at will in the immense pasture of literature. He may get only a little in one particular field and only a little in another, but what he gets will not be a smattering; it will be thorough within its scope.

Nor am I in favour of taking notes. An eager effort to understand sympathetically, followed by the rumination which we call reflection, is better than reams of notes. Nor am I in favour, speaking generally, of books about books, introductions, prefaces, and other

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parasitic growths. Some books about books are magnificent, but I would read them after, and not before, the books that they are about. Reading professionally is one thing; reading for pleasure is quite another. In no circumstances ought reading for pleasure to take on the appearance of a task. Either it is a lark or it is nothing. A few comprehensive works of reference are all the apparatus indispensable to a reader for pleasure.

I would divide reading into three classes—reading for information, reading for wisdom, reading for emotion. An example of the first is H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*; of the second, Bacon's *Essays*; of the third, Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*. No reader is very likely to indulge equally in all three classes; but no reader will be well advised to eschew entirely any of the classes, for each class helps and corrects the others. If the reader sticks exclusively to the first he may tumble into pedantry; if to the second, into didacticism and schoolmasterishness; if to the third, into weak gush.

Again, I am opposed to fixed times for reading. Fixed times do emphatically a prison make and regular hours a cage. In such clumsy

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and lumbering diversions as golf one must have fixed times or one will be condemned to go forth alone and play against bogey. But for reading one does not have to telephone to thirteen other fellows in order to arrange a foursome or a pair, nor to take a train to the book, nor to change one's clothes, nor to employ another human being to carry one's effects, nor to decide whether one will open the book with a brassy or a cleek, nor to have a bath, nor to take a train home again after the last chapter, nor to discuss at endless length somebody else's performance on the green of the seventeenth chapter. One simply opens the book and begins to read.

Herein lies the advantage of reading over all other recreations except possibly patience, which game, however, inclines one to the vile vice of cheating oneself. Every reader who reads with all his mental and spiritual faculties will find sufficient leisure for reading without forcing himself to comply with a time-table.



Broadly speaking, people simply do not buy books—at any rate of their own free will and for their own pleasure. They borrow them. They steal them. Schoolbooks have very large

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sales, running in some cases to millions. A successful schoolbook means a fortune—not usually to the author, but always to the publisher whose titanic brain has known how to put it on the market. Parents, however, hate to pay for schoolbooks, and children hate to read them: hence schoolbooks are popular only in the sense that taxes are popular. Apart from schoolbooks there is in reality little demand for literature in volume form. In hundreds of small towns and in scores of quite important towns, you will not find a single shop which exists by the sale of books alone.

Fiction has a better chance with the public than other varieties of literature; and we talk of popular novelists—popular novelists also not infrequently talk of themselves. But the fact is, there are no popular novelists. If any novelist is entitled to be described as popular, then what adjective is left for phenomena like Charlie Chaplin, Harry Lauder, Mary Pickford, Dr. Crane, Jack Dempsey, Lloyd George, Harold Lloyd, Donoghue? In Britain, if 5,000 copies of a novel are disposed of, the novel is a success. If 10,000, the novelist is “popular.” If 20,000, the pub-

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lisher sings about it in advertisement columns. If 50,000, the event is said to be unique. If 100,000, the event staggers humanity. If—— But let not the imagination overleap itself.

The greatest publishing miracle of recent years was the triumph of Mr. Hutchinson's *If Winter Comes*. Now in the first sixteen months of its life *If Winter Comes* certainly did not sell more than 200,000 copies in Britain. Which means that at most out of every hundred adult persons one person actually bought the book. A considerable number borrowed the book; but I am talking of purchasers. And I doubt not that there are in Britain to-day millions and millions of adults, capable of reading, who have never even heard of *If Winter Comes*. On the other hand, it is estimated that out of every hundred adult persons in Britain over fifty buy a Sunday newspaper every Sunday in the year.

Of course books are luxuries! Well, they may or may not be. You may call soap a luxury if you choose. But if books are luxuries, they are the cheapest luxuries in the world. For the price of as much soap as will keep your body clean for a year you could buy as much literature as would cleanse your soul

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for half a lifetime. For the price of a first-rate nail-brush you can buy, fully illustrated and well bound, a history of the earth since it was a molten ball down to the apotheosis of Mademoiselle Lenglen. As for the price of an elegant evening-dress, it is more than the equivalent of the cost in encyclopædic form of the whole recorded sum of human knowledge.



Such extraordinary facts should give rise to some hard thinking in the minds of those who like to read and who feel that life is not as interesting as it might be. Why not deliberately set about the formation of a library? People collect cups and saucers, tankards, snuff-boxes, fans, models of ships, gramophone records, swords, breast-plates, pictures, prints, even postage stamps. Why not collect books? With great respect for the august collectors of postage stamps I would say that books are almost, if not quite, as interesting as postage stamps. True, they occupy more space and are less easily moved from one house to another; but, to compensate, they are not so easily lost, and fraudulent imitations are less frequent in the book world than in the postage-

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stamp world ; also the range and choice and scope of the book collector are immensely greater than those of the postage-stamp collector. Again, books can be read, and postage stamps generally can't.

The majority of households have a few books, though I question if one household in a hundred possesses five hundred volumes, and the exclamation of visitors at the spectacle of even one well-filled bookcase is : " Oh ! What a lot of books you've got ! " As a rule people don't collect books ; they let books collect themselves, at haphazard, and after a time they are entirely at a loss to explain how such-and-such a book found its way on to their shelves. This is not the right method of book-collecting.

For myself I would say that the two finest rules for an inexperienced book-collector are :

1. Never buy a book that you don't believe you want to read.
2. Never read a book that you haven't bought.

The first rule prevents you from committing the follies of a woman at a January sale, and the second rule—if you are genuinely attached to literature—forces you to buy, even at the

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sacrifice of other pleasures. And when it doesn't force you to buy, the second rule forces you to wait, which is excellent discipline, besides providing you with the sensations of the hunter who has glimpsed his prey.

THE DECENT EXPOSURE OF GIRLS¹

I LIVE in the heart of the West End of London, and in the heart of the luxury-shopping district. All the streets round about me are mainly devoted, as regards their ground-floors at any rate, to the great business of adorning women and furnishing women with elegant trifles, including sweets and cakes. It is impossible for me to go forth without seeing all sorts of astonishing social phenomena. Among the things I have noticed is the increasing tendency to expose young women all day or most of the day in shop windows.

Now there is going to be in this article no suggestion whatever of sexual scandal. I am convinced—and it cannot be doubted—that the establishments which expose young women in their windows do so with no motive save a strictly commercial motive, and that a charge involving the subjection of innocence to the lure of vice would justly shock their owners. I make no such charge.

¹ It is interesting to note that the London tramway authorities refused to allow this article, on its original appearance, to be advertised on their cars.

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The young women exposed are sometimes attractive and more often not, and they are never, so far as I can judge, brought into direct contact with customers genuine or false. They are paid to ply various handicrafts in full view of the population passing before the windows. Some of their handicrafts have a certain mild interest ; others have no interest. The idea of the owners is to explain to the public the processes of the handicrafts practised. But the girls invite a special attention from the male part of the population merely because they are girls. And the girls are utterly defenceless against observation, however persistent and odious it may be. Of course the girls get hardened to it, which hardening I deem to be in itself regrettable.



Further, the girls live through their day in a very confined space ; they cannot move with any freedom ; and whether the weather is hot or cold the situation must be unpleasant, as anybody can find out for himself by sitting at a large window for a few hours at a stretch. The inner side of a big sheet of plate glass is nearly always either too hot or too cold. Again and again, in inclement months, I have

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seen girls at work with hands and arms red and blue from cold, and citizens gazing at them quite unmoved !

Still further, some establishments of much smartness have the habit of keeping girls standing outside their doors for no apparent purpose except advertisement. They are usually dressed smartly in tight, mannish clothes which I should imagine to be decidedly uncomfortable. They stand still for hours. I have rarely seen one move. If it be urged that they are there to open the doors of taxis and the door of the establishment, my answer is that customers ought to be able to do these mighty jobs for themselves, and that if they cannot, then a man would be better suited than a girl to wait on the helpless sloth of the well-to-do.

No girl ought to stand still in the street or in a porch all day and at all seasons. And what shall be said of the employment of girls to stand moveless holding a standard or ensign from misty morn to dusky afternoon ? What must be the stunted state of mind induced in such girls by such stupid tasks—tasks compared to which the watching of a lathe is all excitement, variety, and brain-work ; tasks

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which a wooden statue would do much better than a living girl ?

These phenomena which I observe contravene no law. Nor do they seem to afflict the public conscience. But I think they ought to afflict the public conscience, and I wish they did. For myself, the sight of those misdirected girls would keep me out of any shop displaying them.

THE MURDERER'S CONFESSION

SOME little time since, the Home Secretary startled the public by stating that if condemned murderers made a confession of guilt the rule of the Home Office was to suppress the fact. The reasons for this strange policy, so far as they could be comprehended, seemed to originate in a desire to spare the feelings of the malefactor's family and close friends.

Now the state of mind of a human being faced with the certainty of an immediate violent death to be committed deliberately, ruthlessly, and in cold blood, may be, and I think generally is, extremely complex. It always contains some element of the histrionic, and necessarily so. A man who has been the centre of public attention, and who actually is till the moment of death the centre of attention in a highly specialised pathological world such as a prison, can rarely behave with naturalness. He is bound to feel that he has a part to play ; he is bound to feel a certain vanity, if not pride ; he cannot but be obsessed by the phenomenon of his own unusualness. And he will adopt a pose accordingly. The pose will probably break down in the

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final instants, but till then it may be maintained with astonishing power and completeness ; and sometimes it never breaks down.

The view is a mistaken one that the prospect of dissolution will always rouse the conscience into full activity. Many men have died with lies on their lips, and now and then those lies have been mischievous or malicious. (The explanation perhaps is that the imagination has been too weak to present to the mind an adequate picture of what was about to happen.) Sincerity can seldom be the accompaniment of a despair which is morally supported by strict discipline and which is not heightened by solitude. An outburst might bring sincerity, but outbursts are not very apt to occur in the atmosphere of the condemned cell. Hence the absence of a confession proves nothing ; it does not prove innocence, nor afford even a presumption of innocence.

So that when a man overcomes all the subtle and various impediments to confession, his confession ought surely to be treated with the utmost solemnity and given the utmost effectiveness. Of course a murderer's mentality may be so peculiar that he will say to the Governor or the Chaplain : " I confess to

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you, but I ask you to treat what I have told you as strictly confidential.” There may be such men ; if there are, I think that their wishes should be granted.



But supposing that a man confesses and makes no condition—is publication of the confession to be withheld because he has not specifically asked for it ? I should say not. A man might hesitate to ask for publication ; he might hesitate from delicacy of mind, lest he should seem to be craving for advertisement. Also he might merely forget to ask for publication, or he might assume publication, or he might decide that in confessing he had done his share. In any case, the reasons in favour of publication of a confession made without conditions are overwhelming.

One of them is that the moral value of confession *before all men* is immense.

Another has to do with the mental situation of the jury. In the jury you have a body of individuals who have been engaged in a sort of task to which they are unaccustomed and for which they have received no training whatever ; and their responsibility is simply terrible. It is well known that jurymen in murder trials

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take their functions with commendable seriousness, and that in very many instances their difficulties are much intensified by the fact that they object in principle to the barbarous institution of capital punishment. Few jury decisions in a murder trial can be absolutely free from every qualm of doubt, and the qualms will certainly increase once the irrevocable verdict has been announced. The inner life of a man who has helped to send another man to a violent death may well be poisoned for months and years by irrepressible doubts concerning the dead man's guilt. Jurymen therefore are entitled to know if a condemned man has confessed. To deprive them of such knowledge is wanton, uncivic, ungrateful, and unjust.



Again, take the case of the public-spirited citizen who is jealous for the right administration of justice and for the dignity of the law. This man also is entitled to some consideration. It is bad for the repute of the judicial system that this man should continue to entertain doubts about the righteousness of State justice after those doubts might be set at rest. After a recent trial the conscience of all the

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thinking part of the community was gravely disturbed by a single article printed in a responsible legal journal and reproduced throughout the country in the popular press. The arguments there brought forward may or may not have been cogent ; they had their effect, and it is a lasting effect. If they could have been destroyed by the publication of a confession, then that confession ought to have been published. That justice shall be public is an axiom. Surely then the vindication of justice should be public too.

Lastly, let us look at the case of the family and close friends of the condemned man. The Home Secretary has given his opinion that the feelings of these persons ought to be spared, if there is a confession. But which of their feelings ? Family pride, self-love, the natural affectionate bias in favour of a relative or near companion ? Why should such feelings be spared by the suppression of a paramount fact where publication is so obviously valuable to the commonwealth ? Moreover, suppression, though it may spare certain feelings, does not spare other and perhaps graver feelings. If a relative has doubts of the prisoner's guilt, those doubts must make him resentful and

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antagonistic to the judiciary. They may implant in him a grievance which turns a better citizen into a worse citizen, and which may last to the end of his life. Is it more disadvantageous to him, and to the State, that his pride should be hurt or that he should live in a permanent dissatisfaction founded upon error ?

CLOTHES AND MEN

A CONTINENTAL reputation is something ; and both the English male creature and the English male creature's clothes have an enormous prestige on the Continent. At his physical best the Englishman is held to be without a rival in form, carriage, and distinction ; and though some Scandinavians might well dispute this, not even Scandinavians would dispute his pre-eminence in the matter of attire. (I say nothing of his mental qualities, about which the leading continental races have their own views—to which they are doubtless entitled.)

For men's clothes London is to masculine Europe what Paris is to feminine Europe. To be dressed in London is the ambition of youthful dandies from Calais to Bucharest ; and the ambition persists, despite the effect of the singular attire which hundreds of thousands of Englishmen choose to display every summer in continental capitals.

Bond Street is supposed to be the chosen haunt of the well-dressed man. Well, I have had perhaps exceptional opportunities of inspecting the pavements of Bond Street on fine

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mornings in spring and autumn, when the latest fashions in suits appear on the most perfect male bodies in the civilised world. I have often issued out into Bond Street for the express purpose of regarding those suits on those bodies. And they made a very pleasing spectacle; and they engendered in myself the mad desire for perfection in dress, and I agreed that the continental reputation of the same was well deserved. Britain may not be able to win tennis championships, but the morning sights of Bond Street are still unrivalled.

And yet in Britain, just as in other countries, there is almost no public interest in male attire. The world's greatest dressmakers advertise themselves freely in the papers (and indeed the papers would be a poor and a dull thing without their lovely and exciting proclamations), and they plant their establishments in prominent thoroughfares. But the world's greatest tailors are generally content to hide themselves with the modesty of violets in streets known only to taxi-drivers; the supreme sartorial names, murmured with awe in the selectest clubs, never imprint themselves in the Press. No more would they dream of

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advertising than M.D.'s and K.C.'s would dream of advertising. The difference is that while K.C.'s and M.D.'s are forbidden to advertise and some of them privately yearn to advertise, the highest stars of tailordom are quite free to advertise—but don't. There is some enigma here, to which the key is probably lost.

Of course some sartorial firms, and some good ones, do advertise; but their wares as a rule are specialities, such as collars and fur coats. It is curious that the illustrated wearer of the former is a type of young man with a strong chin but apparently brainless, and the illustrated wearer of the latter is a type of old, haughty *roué* who looks as if he may have had a considerable past in the matrimonial courts. At any rate, male attire is not advertised to the one-thousandth part of the extent to which female attire is advertised.



One reason for the lack of public interest in men's attire is of course the undeniable fact that men dislike to do or be anything characteristically feminine. Women will imitate men, but men will not imitate women. Hence men keep quiet about their clothes. The

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dandies, or the merely well-dressed among them, will put themselves to an immense amount of trouble and expense over clothes, and then make their appearance with a deliberately casual air as though nothing on earth had happened. Save in the strictest secrecy they will never discuss their raiment. They are content with a silent appreciation of their wonderful achievements.

But there is another reason for the lack of public interest in men's attire. Not merely do we rightly despise the fop—the man who lives for clothes—but we have a prejudice against the man who shows any sustained interest in his dress. (Such prejudice may be a remnant of Puritanism—I believe it is.) And we rather admire the man who will not go to the tailor's until he is dragged thither by his wife. With this prejudice and this admiration I have no sympathy, and I hope that both are dying out.

I would sooner see a fop in the street than a man whose suit ought obviously to have been sold or burnt last year but one. The fop has at least achieved something and is not an eyesore. The scarecrow is an eyesore and has simply left something undone, either from

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conceit or from sloth. The fop is not without his use in society. He keeps tailors alert. He sets the pace. He may often be an ass, but he is also an idealist, a searcher after perfection; we have none too many searchers after perfection, and an ass engaged in that quest is entitled to some of our esteem.

The man who for any reason—affectation, idleness, self-esteem—despises clothes and the fashions thereof, implies thereby that fashion is absurd and negligible, and that the sole purpose of clothes is to give a decent and comfortable protection against climatic conditions. This argument cannot possibly be maintained. Fashion is neither absurd nor negligible. It is one of the most powerful influences upon human conduct, an influence which nobody can escape. Artists, for instance, will flout fashion, but only some fashion; they are the slaves of their own fashion. And non-artists who flout fashion in clothes are always the slaves of fashion in some other article—such as tobacco, politics, newspapers.

Further, the sole purpose of clothes—whatever it once may have been—is no longer merely to give protection. An important purpose of clothes is to make a pleasing visual

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impression — partly on oneself but chiefly on other people. This is unquestionable. Why, therefore, should it not be candidly admitted ?



The importance of being well dressed, while not being a dandy, is strongly insisted on in certain professions and callings ; and a carefully dressed man will always have the advantage over a carelessly dressed man in beginning business relations. The first thought of a negligent man seeking a situation is invariably to remedy his negligence ; the pity is that sometimes he cannot remedy it.

Platitudes, you will say. They are ; but it is astonishing how the most obvious platitudes are ignored by seemingly sensible persons in daily life.

The negligent man will object that he cannot afford to dress well. Not so. Every one can afford to dress well on his own plane of expenditure. It is a matter not of money but of interest in the subject. He who is interested in a subject will speedily acquire taste in that subject, and the skill to get the best effect at the lowest cost. Nine out of

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every ten of us could easily produce a better effect on the eye of the beholder than we actually do without spending a penny more than we habitually spend.

We are guilty of a number of errors and omissions, the chief of which I will enumerate.

First.—We won't take trouble. A great living statesman is reported to have said : "I put on the first things that come to hand, and people don't seem to mind." This is the practice of many of us, but it is no way to dress. People do mind.

Second.—We forget that dress comprises much more than a suit of clothes. If a man went forth in a suit of clothes and nothing else, he would make a sensation which might seriously incommode him. There is no sense in procuring a good suit of clothes unless all the rest of the attire from hat to heels harmonises with it, not merely in colour but in style and excellence. Clumsy boots will make the finest suit look ridiculous. How often one has the misfortune to see a man who has used brains and taste in matching shirt, necktie, and socks with his suit, but whose exposed handkerchief produces on our teeth the effect of scratching a coin on a slate. Such men

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ought to be fined forty shillings or go to prison.

Third.—We place ourselves like dolls in the hands of our tailors or other furnishers. We let them work their will upon us. We accept submissively their often ill-founded assertions that everything is all right. Tailors, for instance, are human, and want overseeing. The price of smartness is eternal vigilance. And is there a tailor in the land, save one or two whom I have personally intimidated, who does not proceed on the assumption that pockets are ornamental and not intended to hold things? Suits ought to be finally tried on with everything in the pockets that the pockets will have to contain. If the suit does not fit then, the suit is wrong. Here we have the divine male institution of the pocket—and tailors conspire to render it monstrous!

Fourth.—Having got our clothes, we do not take care of them. We treat them like step-children. Of course courage as well as true affection is needed for the just treatment of clothes. It takes a brave man to press his trousers on a frosty night.

Fifth.—We do not put our clothes on properly. I defy you to walk a hundred yards

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along the Strand or Fifth Avenue without seeing a man the collar of whose coat sticks up above the collar of his overcoat—except in summer, when his overcoat is left lying huddled in the wrong creases at home.

ANDRÉ GIDE'S *DOSTOEVSKY*

ANDRÉ GIDE is now one of the leaders of French literature. The first book of his to attract wide attention among the lettered was *L'Immoraliste*. Since then, in some twenty years of productiveness, he has gradually consolidated his position until at the present day his admirers are entitled to say that no other living French author stands so firm and so passionately acknowledged as an influence. His authority over the schools of young writers who contribute to or are published by *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (with which he has been intimately connected from its foundation) is quite unrivalled. And it must be stated, as a final proof of mastership, that he has powerful and not despicable opponents.

To my mind his outstanding characteristic is that he is equally interested in the æsthetic and in the moral aspect of literature. Few imaginative writers have his broad and vivacious curiosity about moral problems, and scarcely any moralists exhibit even half his preoccupation with the æsthetic. He is a distinguished, if somewhat fragmentary, literary critic—not merely of French but of Russian,

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English, and classical literatures. I shall not forget his excitement when he first read *Tom Jones*. "Ce livre m'attendait," said he, with grave delight. His practical interest in the technique of fiction never fades; indeed it grows. So much so that his latest novel, now appearing serially in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, really amounts to an essay in a new form; and with startling modesty he had labelled it, in the dedication, "my first novel."



Of course no novelist can achieve anything permanent without a moral basis or background. Balzac had it. De Maupassant had it to the point of savagery. Zola had it, in his degree. Paul Bourget—a writer whom highbrows, French and English, have still to reckon with—has it. But André Gide writes in the very midst of morals. They are not only his background but frequently his foreground. Scarcely one of his books (the exception may be *Les Caves du Vatican*) but poses and attempts to resolve a moral problem.

It was natural and even necessary that such a writer as Gide should deal with such a writer as Dostoevsky. They were made for each other—or rather Dostoevsky was made for

ANDRÉ GIDE'S *DOSTOEVSKY*

Gide. I first met Gide in the immense field of Dostoevsky. He said, and I agreed, that *The Brothers Karamazov* was the greatest novel ever written. This was ages ago, and years have only confirmed us in the opinion.

"But," said Gide, "everything that Dostoevsky ever wrote is worth reading and must be read. Nothing can safely be omitted."

At that period there was none but a mutilated French translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Gide had to read Dostoevsky in German. A complete translation, I fear, still lacks in French. But André Gide can now read him in full in English; which is to our credit and his. Let us, however, not be too much uplifted. Dostoevsky's important *Journal d'un Ecrivain* exists in French but not in English.



Those who read Gide's *Dostoevsky* will receive light, some of it dazzling, on both Dostoevsky and Gide. I can recall no other critical work which so cogently justifies and so securely establishes its subject. If any one wants to appreciate the progress made by Western Europe in the appreciation of Russian psychology, let him compare the late Count Melchior de Vogüé's *Le Roman Russe* with the

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present work. It is impossible to read Gide's *Dostoevsky* without enlarging one's idea of Dostoevsky and of the functions of the novel. All the conventional charges against the greatest of the Russians—morbidly, etc. etc.—fall to pieces during perusal. They are not killed; they merely expire. And Dostoevsky in the end stands out not simply as a supreme psychologist and narrator, but also as a publicist of genius endowed with a prophetic view over the future of the nations as astounding as his insight into the individual. "There never was," says Gide, "an author more Russian in the strictest sense of the word and withal so universally European."

Dostoevsky had various and distressing personal defects, but his humanity and his wisdom, doubtless derived from the man Jesus who delivered the Sermon on the Mount, are unique; and André Gide's demonstration of their worth is his invaluable contribution to Dostoevsky literature.

THE RIVIERA

AMID all the implacable competition of holiday resorts and health resorts, the Riviera more than maintains its prestige. Indeed, the supreme rivalries in the world of the organisation of pleasure lie between certain neighbouring towns on this Mediterranean shore. Immense campaigns are conducted, with immense capital; the very characters of whole communities are changed by the will of two or three forceful individuals possessing imagination; and whatever the results, the Riviera must gain. People may, and people do, inveigh against the Riviera. Let them. Let them say, for instance, that you can walk up one side of a famous avenue and get sun-stroke, and down the other side a minute later and get a chill. Let them say that when it rains on the Riviera it does rain, or that the purveying inhabitants are out to empty your purse, or that you never know what repellent notorieties you won't meet there, or a hundred other things. No matter. The serpentine string of pearls continues to glitter more and more brightly. And you continue to go

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south—if and when you can obtain seats in the packed Blue train.

The reason for the triumph of the long coast-line is plain. It is connected with the facts that the Riviera is accessible, and that the world is richer than it was, and that travel and lodging and catering have been scientifically organised just as manufacture has been organised; and it is centrally based on the paramount fact of climate and geography. The Mediterranean has been the home of pleasure for centuries simply because of its natural advantages. When you have variegated and sublime scenery, an equable winter temperature, cataracts of sunshine, and a sea that is bluer than any artist can paint it, you have all the raw material, and much of the finished material, of an unsurpassable winter pleasure resort. (Heaven has begun the work, and one may say that the modern makers of the Riviera have completed it.) The region may not be Paradise; and I agree that it is certainly not the garden of Eden; but its qualities immeasurably outweigh its defects; it is the best substitute for Paradise or Eden available for seekers after such places, and anyhow the real Paradise cannot be reached

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without a far longer and more terrifying journey than that which separates Calais from Nice.



The point of the Riviera is this—that there, when other regions sadden the soul and mortify the body, you can walk out of a morning and feel that it is an ecstasy merely to be alive. Call it heliotherapy.

And in whatever fashion you prefer to be alive, the Riviera is capable of suiting your taste. If you desire to burn money, to startle the righteous, to turn night into day, to exist as you would exist in London or Paris—only more so, the Riviera gives the facilities. If you have to look twice at a ten-shilling note before spending it, the Riviera will eagerly meet you—so much so that within a radius of a couple of hundred yards in one of the larger pearls you can live just as cheaply or just as expensively as you wish. Again, if your notion of being alive is to devote yourself to outdoor games and sports, the Riviera will provide you with everything to that end—except possibly foxes. Again, if for you the ideal existence is the prim existence, regular, monotonous, correct, utterly calm, self-centred, rapt away from the world, conscientiously re-

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pudiating the rough world, the Riviera can offer you exactly what you need. Again, if you are historically curious you can, within the limits of a short motor-drive on the Riviera, pass from the most modern race-course and totalisator right back to an authentic Roman Coliseum where men fought their fellow-beasts, or from a twentieth-century water-main to an aqueduct that is nearly as old as sin. Again, if your caprice is to live in different civilisations on the same day, you can stroll out of the hotel where you may regulate the temperature of your bedroom on a dial, climb a hill on your own feet, and enter a village where in all essentials life is endured as it was endured five hundred years ago in the dwellings and round about the keeps of five hundred years ago.

And so, through the abundance of geology, botany, scenic panoramas, marine displays, sun-risings, sun-settings, carnivals, shrines, I might continue the catalogue of contrasts in this Alp-enclosed land where every city has its ancient quarter as picturesque as its new quarter is geometrically prosaic. The truth is, that nobody could believe the Riviera who has not seen it.

JOURNALESE

A MONTHLY review has been attending to the question of bad literary style—otherwise called “journalese.” But why in justice it should be called journalese I do not quite see, for the average newspaper in a city of any importance is written quite as well as the average book. I will undertake to find as much bad English in, for example, the recent translation of Lyeskov’s defenceless *The Cathedral Folk* as can be found in any ten daily papers on any given day. Here is an example: “And now, my dear fellow, the schoolmaster, let’s you and I have a good chat.” The “you and I” was probably inserted as an afterthought, and the translator forgot to alter the “let’s”; but “you and I” is neither a misprint nor a slip of haste—it is deliberate. (Translation not by a heathen, but by Isabel F. Hapgood.) However, there are far worse things than bad grammar. And I now beg to offer what I hope is the finest example of “journalese” in the history of the English language:

AN APPEAL TO INTELLECT

“At long last, after months of listening to woolly futilities in which modern

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playwrights have sought to tear our emotions up by the roots by hectic wallowing in what are miscalled the realities, an appeal was made to our intellect.

"Each sentence in this sparkling comedy was crisp, polished, and compact as a piston-rod. Listening to these actors rolling the slow, stately periods round their mouths was like biting into a succession of luscious peaches warm from a sunlit wall.

"Again and again we dipped into the cool, sweet well of English undefiled. The effect on us had all the astringency of ammonia. Here was the bracing tonic that we have for so long wanted."

Conceive the spectacle of playwrights in woolliness employing the device of flushed wallowings to tear up the roots of emotions! How would they set about it? Then the piston-rod, polished and compact; but crisp—hard and brittle! Engineers would love such a piston-rod. And notice the wonderful lightning transformation of the crisp, polished, and compact sentences into slow, stately periods. See the actors rolling the said periods, now crisp, now stately, round their mouths and thereby producing in the audience

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the sensation of biting peaches—and peaches warm from a sunlit wall! Next, the poet has fallen off the wall into that dear, familiar, excellent cistern—the cool, sweet well of English undefiled. And in another moment we are taking ammonia for its tonic astringency. Is ammonia a tonic?

This piece of dramatic criticism did not appear in the *John o' Groats Advertiser*. It appeared in a London morning paper. Also it was “an appeal to intellect.” Also it was an appreciation of Congreve’s *The Way of the World*, and incidentally it shows the singular influence of Congreve’s prose on a certain type of mind. You may say that I am only demonstrating that journalists do write “journalese,” and that “authors” would be incapable of such writing. But the criticism was signed “S. P. B. M.” Can this S. P. B. M. be Mr. S. P. B. Mais, Master of Arts, who took honours in the English Literature Finals at Oxford, who was once professor of English at the R.A.F. Cadet College, who habitually lectures on literature, who has composed several novels, and who wrote *An English Course for Schools*? Well, surely he cannot. And yet if he is not, who is he?

HISTORY IN THE STREETS

THE old gentleman of the family, when in favourable circumstances he fairly gets going, will say :

“ Ah yes ! That was before I met your grandmother. There was only a level crossing in those days, and it was kept by a man with a wooden leg. When they decided to build a bridge to carry the main road over the railway he took to drink, and used to go from one public-house to another and say it was the end of the British Empire, because he couldn't wave a flag and stop the street traffic. All the best people lived in West Street then. The shops were away in Furlong Row up the hill. And my father could remember the time when Furlong Row was a straight furlong of the original main road, and the market was held round the church. Your grandmother did all her shopping in Furlong Row for years after our marriage. Then they made a new main road, to do away with the gradients, for the sake of the horses, and called it West Street, and it was shorter too ; but a lot of people didn't like that either.

“ And a fine to-do there was when Dr. Hart

HISTORY IN THE STREETS

sold his house in West Street to a grocer who built out the front of it and turned it into a shop. That wasn't the end of the Empire—it was the end of the world. Half West Street's been pulled down and rebuilt since I was a lad. What Dr. Hart would have said if he'd seen tram-lines in West Street I don't know. Rates were 1s. 9d. in the £ then. As for these *char-à-bancs* . . . ! I can't understand why everybody wants to be gadding about, rushing here and rushing there. In my time we stayed at home and worked. Never thought of a summer holiday. Now it's all holidays and *fal-lals* and no work. England is not what she was, and you can see it everywhere."

And so the old gentleman will wander on, till somebody with a decisive gesture switches the conversation to a fresh subject, and he closes up like a flower at night.



Doubtless not everything that he relates is quite accurate, for he is extremely proud of his years and loves to exaggerate the startlingness of the changes seen in a long life. The aged must have their social triumphs. He may even deliberately invent. If they are to be believed there are about a thousand old

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gentlemen in London to-day who shot snipe, or saw snipe shot, in Belgrave Square. I myself know a Methuselah who positively asserts that his father shot the first partridge that ever was shot in all England. And even stranger matters are recounted by the senile.

Nevertheless the old gentleman—whose wife shopped in Furlong Row when Furlong Row *was* Furlong Row—is probably in the main quite truthful, and he has at any rate fulfilled one very useful function. He has forced his younger hearers to realise that their borough was not always what it is to-day, that the borough has grown, evolved, developed, and that good and highly interesting reasons exist for the almost incredible changes which have occurred. Fancy Furlong Row—that procession of shabby wigwams inhabited by the scum of the earth—having once been the smart shopping centre of the town! The revelation stimulates the mind.



Curious that the impression produced by the old gentleman should fade so soon, as it usually does, from the minds of the younger persons! Curious that the otherwise intelligent inhabitants of any given place, the otherwise

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enlightened citizens of any given city, should so persistently ignore the living interest, not of the people in the streets and squares which surround them, but of the streets and squares themselves! Curious that they should assume, as they do, that the environment in which they live is a fixed, changeless, haphazard thing, instead of being, as it is, a living constantly evolving organism, every one of whose changes is the result of the slow working-out of human ideas and a mirror of the qualities and defects of what is called civilisation!

Talk about history and about the advantages of reading history—you can if you like read the very stuff of history in the stones and bricks and roads and lanes around you. The mere Ford car which you drive is a proof, first, that Columbus discovered America; and second, that America discovered you.

It is a fact that the great majority of grown-up persons, complaining of the dullness and flatness of existence, resolutely keep their eyes and their ears closed to the interestingness which is beating in upon them on every side. This is especially true of the dweller in big cities such as London. He takes each morning the shortest cut to his train or his

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omnibus or his tram-car, never thinking that the thoroughfares he uses have a history intrinsically as interesting as any history. He takes the same shortest cut back again at evening. If he goes forth on Sunday he takes the shortest cut to green hills or golf-courses. He is glad to be out of his environment, which he despises because of its alleged tedium and lack of interest for a man of superior intelligence.



It is urged against such as him that he separates himself from the local government of his parish or borough. Quite true. But he does worse. As a rule he utterly repudiates his environment. He learns as little as he possibly can of it. Not only will he refuse to take the trouble to vote for his civic representatives—he does not know even where his parish or borough begins or where it ends, and he does not care. He has not the least clear notion how or why it came into existence, or in which direction it is tending, or why it is tending in any direction whatever.

[I will not argue that among the first duties of every citizen is the duty to acquire some understanding knowledge about that spot on the earth's surface where he happens to live.

HISTORY IN THE STREETS

My point is that, for those with the slightest natural inclination towards the study of mankind an inquiry into the history of their environment will provide one of the most absorbing and profitable diversions that can be conceived. Furthermore, that it will banish ennui and quite cure the common distressing delusion that one's town, district, or suburb is humanly less interesting than, say, Canterbury, Warsaw, or Constantinople. Such an inquiry is also far easier than the ordinary run of historical inquiries. The principal materials for it lie at hand ; they are heaped up round about in enormous quantities ; and indeed you cannot go beyond your front door without directly or indirectly helping the inquiry.

WOMAN TWENTY YEARS HENCE

To take the exterior first, I see no reason whatever for anticipating that within the next twenty years there will be any change in woman's attitude towards personal adornment. If there is to be a change it will be that in the future she will spend still more of her time and her brains and still more of her man's money (or her own) in that great and praiseworthy enterprise than she does even to-day. I say "praiseworthy" because I agree with woman in this—that one of her first duties is to look as nice as she can—and nicer if possible. I seriously regard the spectacle of an attractive woman well turned out as perhaps the finest sight that life offers to the eye. (Note : all women are attractive.)

That this opinion holds generally is clear from the ever-increasing public importance of the mighty cult of frocks. Compare the size of the big shops of twenty years ago with the size of the big shops of to-day,—and their chief lure is always feminine attire. Compare the newspapers of twenty years ago with the newspapers of to-day, in the matter of woman's

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outstanding interest. Frocks and what is beneath them and below them and above them and on them, are not merely an important item in popular dailies ; they are the main item, occupying more space than anything else, and illustrated with more drawings.

Take away feminine attire from the newspapers, and from the shop windows of the principal streets, and you would scarcely recognise either the press or the thoroughfares without it. Brightness would fall from the air and gloom descend upon our cities. And in this statement there is no poetic licence. The ageless institution of woman's clothes becomes more impressive, extensive, and complex with every new "season." I would not assert that the best-dressed women are better dressed to-day than the best-dressed women of the past. But more women, and far more women, are well dressed than in the past. An intelligent interest in personal appearance is penetrating deeper and deeper into the lower strata of society. Also the interest in it is more openly acknowledged than it used to be. Twenty years ago did anybody ever see a woman examine herself in a tiny mirror and dab her perilous nose with powder at table in

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the middle of a repast ? I have observed no sign of a reaction anywhere. On the contrary, the upward curve steadily continues.



It has been said, and particularly by women-feminists, that woman's interest in love and marriage is declining. I have never noticed it, and I do not believe it. Interest in love and marriage has probably not increased, but it certainly has not diminished. People marry later than they did ; that, however, is because they are more prudent than aforesaid, and because the ability of women to keep themselves or partly keep themselves, combined with the growth of personal freedom, has abolished the old, urgent, economic, utterly unromantic motive for marrying. Once it was marriage or nothing for a woman. Now, happily, there are alternatives. But these alternatives do not permanently weigh in the scale against marriage.

To-day, of course, there are women obviously born for spinsterhood, but, in the past too, there were women obviously born for spinsterhood. There will always be such women ; the difference in regard to them between to-day and yesterday is that to-day they need

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not be as frustrate as they were yesterday ; they need not be frustrate at all : which is a very considerable improvement in the organisation of the social structure.



The woman's cult of personal appearance is in itself a proof of her unabated interest in love and marriage, and the modern growth of the cult is a proof that she has become more efficient in the service of a profound instinct. That instinct is the primary instinct—chief agent for the furtherance of nature's mysterious plan—to attract and please men.

In this matter a heresy has sprung up during recent years, to the effect that women do not dress and adorn themselves to impress men but to impress their fellow-women, and therefore the cult of clothes has little or no bearing on the relations of the sexes.

I venture to dismiss this heresy as ridiculous. True, that few men understand the art of dress as women do (though a few understand it better) ! True, that woman does desire to impress other women by her appearance ! But why ? The reason is that woman sees in other women both competitors and expert judges. She wants to impress them because

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their approval and envy constitute the proof that she has succeeded in her effort to be attractive—to men. Women who from any cause are deprived of the regular companionship of men do not trouble to make themselves attractive to each other. And the advent of a male among them, even one poor solitary male, instantly arouses them to emulation in feats of self-improvement. This is notorious. It has always been so; it is as much so to-day as it ever was; and it will be the same in 1946 and at all future dates until nature fundamentally alters the grand scheme of things.



To-day woman is less "domestic" than she was at the beginning of the century, and twenty years hence she will certainly be still less "domestic" than she is to-day. In old times a household had to be self-sufficient; women span and wove; not so very many years ago housewives took pride in making their own bread, and rearing domestic animals for food, and much of the laundry work was done at home. The household day in my youth began with the laborious lighting of a coal fire; patent firelighters were esteemed

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the last word in labour-saving devices ! And heating is still largely a home-enterprise ; the same for cleaning ; the same for cooking.

But the great principle of co-operation is spreading more and more. One sees it to-day at its most advanced in service-flats where there is a common dining-room, and where heating and lighting and cleaning are all electric. Domestic dirt in particular is slowly disappearing. The age must and will come, and come soon, when the house-mistress will be freed from all the hard physical work, nine-tenths of the work of every kind, and nine-tenths of the petty worries which weary her to-day.

The "servant-question" will be practically solved by the practical disappearance of domestic servants. From tens of thousands of households domestic servants have already vanished ; and yet, thanks to the extension of co-operative services and the application of science to household tasks, house-mistresses have less to do, and less to worry about, than when they kept servants ; and very many of them, even if they could get servants, would not return to the ancient régime of servants.

The tendency towards arrangements whose object is to lessen and simplify housekeeping

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is observable everywhere. Look at the cooked food in the shops. Look at the crowded restaurants. Every meal taken in a restaurant means less housework for house-mistresses.

And the movement as a whole means increased freedom for women. It means that they will go out more into the world and enlarge their ideas. It means that they will be more interesting to themselves and to men. It means that their lives will be brighter. It means that the nervous strain upon them which is especially evident in small households, and which is responsible for so much of the semi-hysteria supposed to be peculiarly feminine, will be greatly saved. Hence I anticipate that the woman of 1946 will be appreciably more "normal" than her forerunners.



In the matter of the everlasting sex-controversy I foresee a troubled period. Woman is in a transition stage ; which implies that man also is in a transition stage. Woman has won the "franchise" in a sense very much wider than the mere political sense of the word. All manner of things are permitted to her which in the immediate past were not permitted to her. Add to this that she is falling more and

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more into the useful habit of earning her own living, and you must admit that she has something to be justly proud of in the way of achievement, and you cannot deny that in efficiency, knowledge, breadth of mind and general interestingness she is the superior of her predecessors. The Oriental ideal of womanhood, still rife even towards the end of the nineteenth century in Britain, has apparently passed; the change is doubtless for the better, and we ought all to rejoice mightily in it.

A large number of decent men, however, are not quite happy about it. They are privately of opinion that woman of late has been getting a bit above herself. I have had men say to me: "Young women are impossible in these days." What my answer was to this terrible statement I shall not disclose.

The argument is that the Oriental idea has not wholly passed, and that woman herself clings to just as much of it as is to her advantage. That is to say, she demands perfect freedom, but at the same time she demands the old protection. Wherein she is asking too much, and fighting against immutable laws.

The situation can be symbolised thus: A man earns money and takes a woman out for

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the evening. He pays. She is fetched from home ; she receives constant deference ; she is restored to her home (after which the man has to go home himself). If she insists on ordering the dinner or supper, so deciding how much the man shall spend, and on staying as late as she thinks she will, so endangering the man's earning capacity for the next day, she is getting a bit above herself. Many men hold that many women are more inclined to treat their entire relations with men on the lines of an evening out.

Such is the argument. Dissatisfaction exists, and patience is needed. Anyhow, three things can be prophesied with assurance about the next twenty years. First, woman will then still be the weaker, and will be in need of protection and compassion, which man will give. Second, there can be no responsibility without power, and in cases of difference of opinion the person who is responsible (which really means financially responsible) will decide the issue, other things, such as common sense and force of individuality, being approximately equal. Third, men and women, given time, will adjust themselves fairly accurately to the new conditions.

BRITISH AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

IN Britain some prejudice was created against American education by rumours that in certain big, opulent, gorgeous universities certain professors had to clear out because their teaching did not accord with the views held by the millionaires who had founded or endowed the said universities. These rumours are important if true, though I have not yet heard of any University which gave its professors an entirely free hand! And numerous progressive Britons have said with pain: "There! You see how capitalist wealth is deliberately poisoning the very wells of knowledge!"

For myself, assuming for the sake of argument that the rumours are substantial, I doubt whether there was any "deliberation" about the affair. The human mind does not work like that. I do not believe that any American millionaire ever said to himself: "I will found a university, or I will pour riches on a university already existing, so that I may help to educate the youth of America in a manner calculated to strengthen the régime which enables me

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and people like me to amass the most prodigious wealth known to history." No! The worst motive that could be properly attributed to a university-making millionaire would be the desire to do the proper thing and acquire prestige. The notion of influencing education in favour of the flourishing of his own caste must have come later, if it came—as probably sometimes it did. It was a natural human notion, but anti-social.

Anyhow, in America millionaires do found or magnificently help universities. In Britain they don't. American universities and schools may be conspicuously, even ostentatiously, wealthy. In Britain they are conspicuously poor. In America they may get more money than is good for them. In Britain they are always pleading for money, and a donation of £25,000 to an educational cause is a front-page story in any newspaper.



I should say that the broad difference between America and Britain in regard to education is that America is passionately interested in education, while Britain is not. During the recent cry for economy in Britain one of the wealthiest and most influential

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of millionaires distinguished himself by very violently urging the cutting down of education as a prime necessity. Nobody shot him. Nobody ostracised him.

I am not qualified to compare American with British education in detail, but one may roughly compare the results, immediate and ultimate. A European has only to watch American children going into school and coming out of school in order to realise that in America children count as they do not count in Europe. American children on these occasions seem to own the earth. They are, comparatively, exultant. They enjoy, eagerly. This pleasing phenomenon may be due to the fact that in America the air of schools is changed every ten minutes, whereas in Europe it is changed about once a day or a week. But it exists, and it is fine ; it is enheartening ; for it shows that one ideal of education, and by no means the least, is achieved in America.

On the other hand, let us take the ultimate result. In my view the chief aim of education should be to enable citizens, not to collect and co-ordinate knowledge—though that is highly important—but to think for themselves, to think straight, and so to pass into mental

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freedom, which is the best of all freedoms. Nonconformity may be a great present nuisance, but it is the mother of freedom, and in the land of the free it ought to get a fair show. Now, right or wrong, European opinion holds that in America nonconformity does not get a fair show. "Movements" are not encouraged; indeed, they are discouraged. The politics of America are a mystery to Europeans, who have never been able to see the difference between Republicans and Democrats. Everybody seems to think alike on fundamentals. And if there are two parties in America, one is the Republican-Democrat and the other is the party whose heads go in danger of prison and whose literature is not smiled upon by the Postmaster-General.

This, of course, is an exaggeration, but exaggeration is the legitimate ornament of controversy and the spot-light on truth. I am a great exaggerator before Heaven, and shall be. Anyhow, conscientious objectors to war are still lying incarcerated in America, which seems to me to imply, somehow, that American educational methods are conceivably capable of improvement.



BRITISH AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

It is undeniable that a wave of nonconformity is washing over considerable parts of the world. In France the newspapers of Paris are banded together with miraculous efficiency to produce conformity, and France is paying the price thereof. In Italy if you think aloud you have to think according to ukase or run the risk of assassination. Spain is under the dominion of a junta whose censorship forbids even the news of civil crimes to cross the frontier. And so on. Europe is surely entitled to look to America for the antidote to this tendency. And Europe does not see the antidote in America. Rather the reverse.

I learn with genuine satisfaction that the number of students in the University of Texas is equal to the number of the total population of Texas a century ago. But I should like to know further, about the University of Texas, that the students are there taught to think for themselves and permitted to think aloud. You can prevent people from thinking aloud, but you cannot prevent them from thinking. You cannot compel people to think as you think; you can only persuade them to do so. Force is a sound argu-

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ment everywhere—except in the kingdom of thought.



As for Britain, though education is a bit better than it was, though primary school teachers now enjoy salaries sufficient to keep body and soul together, and only professors are sweated, nevertheless I sit in sackcloth for the British educational system, some of whose details render me almost homicidal. At the same time I do think that British education does, better than most other systems, successfully teach freedom combined with respect for law. Britain is full of astounding human oddities ; you can see them anywhere in the streets ; it is the home of cranks and visionaries and public nuisances. But one can think aloud freely in this strange island, and people can combine freely together to further any gospel whatsoever. It is something.

WHAT ARE LIFE'S GREATEST SATISFACTIONS ?

CERTAIN answers to this question leap instantly into the mind. For example, to a very beautiful woman her beauty must be an intense, continuous, and supreme satisfaction, not surpassed by any satisfaction experienced by anybody. Feminine beauty is an agreeably common phenomenon, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries. Hence I do not say merely a "beautiful woman," but a "very beautiful woman"; if the satisfaction is to be supreme the beauty must be extraordinary. You may argue that beauty is a gift of heaven; there is no merit about it; therefore it ought not to be a source of satisfaction. My subject, however, is not what ought to be but what is. Moreover, I doubt whether moral excellence is any less a gift than beauty. People are born good, as people are born beautiful. Good people watch over, cherish, and enhance their goodness, and beautiful people must carefully tend their beauty. It is just about as difficult to keep beautiful as to keep good.

Admiration, love, adoration, luxury, wealth, and real power are the rewards of extraordinary

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feminine beauty—always have been and probably always will be. Take a very beautiful woman to whom heaven has vouchsafed a great operatic soprano voice. Think of her in her triumph receiving frantic ovations from the élite of the world at the end of an evening's song. She is lovely ; she is a great artist ; she is a richly paid worker. Life cannot offer a satisfaction more thrilling than hers. She reaches the apex of human glory. You retort that beauty fades. I agree. But while it lasts . . .

Then great wealth. Perhaps no attribute is more criticised, more contemned, than great wealth. Millionaires themselves deplore their millions and enlarge copiously upon the worry thereof. But they take no steps to get rid of their millions. On the contrary, they do all they can to increase them. And almost no scorner of millions would reject the opportunity of becoming a millionaire if it came to him. The inevitable conclusion is that great wealth brings immense satisfactions—of power, of influence, of self-indulgence, satisfactions which the majority of mankind reckon, in practice, as among the greatest. We say

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that there are things that money can't buy. True. But there are also things that virtue can't buy, and that beauty can't buy. And virtue may not last; beauty never lasts. Whereas nearly always great wealth lasts, because the men who have the wonderful wit to acquire it have the equally wonderful wit to keep it. Further, millionaires are invariably realists; they see things and people as things and people actually are. This alone is a towering satisfaction, for it is based on an extreme and rare appreciation of truth.

Then the satisfaction of superlative special faculties exercised to the full with high conscientiousness and skill, as, for instance, by the great lawyer, the great doctor, the great statesman, the great preacher, the great artist, the great writer, the great philosopher, the great scientist! All these men work because an imperious instinct compels them to work. They are by nature specially fitted for their work; they do it supremely well; they enjoy doing it, and they would be miserable if they were prevented from doing it. Their existences may be laborious, but never dull, and for the most part they are very exciting. As a

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rule such beings acquire sooner or later terrific prestige. When they die they die in the conviction that they have favourably affected not only the lives of individuals, but the thoughts, habits, and destinies of nations, perhaps even of the whole human race, and that their names are thenceforward and for ever incorporated in history. Conceive the profound satisfaction hidden beneath the modesty of such a world-benefactor as Pasteur. Well, we simply cannot conceive it! Pasteur and his infrequent equals alone could conceive it.

However, we need not occupy ourselves unduly with the supreme satisfactions, for they are confined to the supreme people, and very few of us are called to be supreme. Fortunately few of us want to be supreme. We are instinctively aware that being supreme is no light business (indeed, it is a terrible business), and that though the supreme satisfactions may be glorious the price paid for them in emotional and intellectual stress and general sacrifice is far heavier than we ourselves could bear. Let us therefore consider the satisfactions that may be common to us all.



LIFE'S GREATEST SATISFACTIONS

I hear at once the word "love"—required love.

But I must pause here to point out that the human race is broadly divided into two sorts of temperaments—the active (often ambitious), and the passive (contemplative, brooding). It is the latter which is passionate, and to which love means the most. To point out also that the human race is divided into two sexes, and that love means much more to women than to men. Also that satisfactions are divided into two kinds—those which have a time-value and are lasting, and those which have an intensity-value and are brief but thrilling.

Now love, in our sense, is a modern development of sexual relationship; the ancients apparently knew little or nothing of it. Anglo-Saxons have certainly conspired to be sentimental about love. If they sing they sing about it, and if they spin yarns they spin yarns about it. Assuredly it is a wondrous development; but whether it is a development which makes on the whole for happiness or for unhappiness, for satisfaction or for dissatisfaction, has not yet been decided. That it brings a little acute happiness is undeniable; that it

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brings a lot of unhappiness is equally undeniable. Few persons passionately in love are happy for long; the major part of their days is passed in torment. Protest against this as much as you please, it is a fact.

When passionate love cools into a steady, mild affection, and the affection is mutual, then satisfaction ensues, and such satisfaction is great. But quite as often passionate love cools into indifference and sometimes it freezes into detestation. Then it causes either boredom or misery. Speaking as impartially as a man can, and courageously braving the anathemas of Anglo-Saxondom, I would say that love ought not to be counted, in itself, among the major sources of satisfaction. Positively successful love, continuing to produce happiness, throughout the years, is in my opinion at least as rare as very great wealth or surpassing genius. Not that I would cut out modern love from human existence and go back to the sex-ideas of the Greeks—even if I could! No! Love is very valuable; for most of us it is inevitable; but I would call it a disciplinary experience rather than a trustworthy source of satisfaction.



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Work, as a source of satisfaction, is not quite so unreliable as love. Happy are those who find congenial work, for the very act of work gives a satisfaction at once profound and pure—safe from remorse or regret. But vast numbers of people, perhaps the majority, never find congenial work. They regard all work as a necessary evil, as an immediate nuisance, and as merely a means to an end. And generally the end is modest enough, for they are not even ambitious—except in day-dreams. They hate to begin the day's work, and they are relieved when the day's work is done. Nevertheless, taking the rough with the smooth, I would count work as directly or indirectly a major source of enduring satisfaction.

For the few, to work is satisfying. For everybody *to have worked* is satisfying, and the more so if the labour has been carried through conscientiously and honestly. The sensation of fatigue after a good day's work is accompanied by a satisfaction than which this world can scarcely offer better. It may be a mild satisfaction, but it wears well. It has a moral quality which is aseptic, preserving it from any decay. To embark on a job, to do it,

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and then to say, "I have done it,"—here indeed is a satisfying experience which, however often repeated, will not grow stale ! The accomplishment may not have all the secondary results hoped for ; it may have none of the secondary results hoped for ; it may end in ambitions frustrated ; but it cannot fail to have the primary result of moral satisfaction in finished endeavour.

The acquirement of knowledge has been for centuries advocated as a means to great satisfaction. But, though I favour and desire knowledge and am always searching after it so far as a natural indolence permits, I think that too much importance may be given to it. In the first place, the average person is so situated that he has neither the leisure nor the opportunity nor the will to get knowledge sufficient to produce in him a great satisfaction. And in the second place, men of learning seem too often to be unable to relate their knowledge to their lives. Nor do their faces appear to be illuminated by some secret ecstasy. They are often mighty grumblers before Heaven. They rarely, with all their learning, have learnt enough to keep themselves in health or to

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bring up their children in a manner fair to the children. They are apt to take to knowledge as the wicked take to vice. Their learning is neither more nor less useful than the miser's money in a safe. They lose the sense of relative values.

It is better for a man to maintain himself in good health than to load himself with learning. Indeed, I would rank good health very high in the major satisfactions of life. I would almost say: "Be healthy and you will be happy." The common phrase, "*enjoy* good health," is a just phrase. When one has good health one enjoys it all the time, and the healthy man needs little else for his satisfaction. Like many deep truths this sounds cynical, but is not.



As for children, children, considered as sources of satisfaction, have drawbacks. They may have poor constitutions; they may be naughty; they may be ungrateful, neglectful, cruel. They may turn out badly. They may even die too soon. They are indeed full of terrible risks. Yet as a source of satisfaction they cannot be beaten—speaking generally! They are a continual fund of interest and of

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pride ; and they arouse in their parents all the finest unselfish emotions. They are exciting, day and night, when they are infants ; and every baby is the most wondrous baby in the universe ; they are exciting during the years of school ; and they are exciting when they grow up. The feelings of a parent as he or she contemplates the spectacle of a young man or girl healthily reared, educated, and launched with a good prospect of success upon the world—these feelings are perhaps the most completely satisfying that a human being can have.

But not everybody can have this experience, or can look forward to it. And the drawback of any attempt to answer the question, “What are life’s greatest satisfactions ?” is that one can scarcely mention a single major satisfaction from which a considerable number of readers are not debarred, either by circumstances nature, or age.



There is, however, one major satisfaction—and it may well be the greatest of all—which is equally open to all. I mean the exercise of benevolence. I do not necessarily mean what are called “good works,” which by the

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way are often bad works, regrettable in their subtly sinister influence on the doer as well as on the receiver, and which in any case many people have neither the time nor the ability to perform.

Let those who can, do good works; the best cure for worry, depression, melancholy brooding, is to go deliberately forth and try to lift with one's sympathy the gloom of somebody else. And let both those who can and those who can't do good works make a practice of benevolent *thought*. Let all think kindly of others; never criticise them, never condemn, never judge; on the contrary, let all condone, excuse, justify, seek to comprehend, seek to put themselves in the place of others. The mental attitude has to be perseveringly cultivated. It cannot be adopted by a mere good resolution. (Some—exceedingly few—are born with it, and all I have to say of them is, that they do not know their luck, for something within them is always mysteriously manufacturing happiness for them.) We must ask ourselves about a thousand times a day, "Who am I to sit in judgment?" We must learn to perceive the absurdity, the impudence, and the preposterousness of sitting in judgment.

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To err is human, to forgive ought to be. Here is the finest form of benevolence, and it will produce the finest form of satisfaction—a satisfaction which increases from year to year and only reaches its maximum when life ends.

TREATISE ON MAKING FRIENDS

PROBABLY it has occurred to few people that next-door neighbours are always peculiar, or mysterious, or quite unaccountable, or disagreeable, or unbearable, or criminal. This is extremely true of next-door neighbours in large cities.

Take a long street of similar houses, each with little front-garden and long back-garden, and a high fence between back-gardens. The character of the houses and the gardens and all the appurtenances thereof would seem to indicate that the tenants are just nice, orderly persons with normal ideas and habits and a strong tendency towards propriety and correctness,—in fact, that their notions about the right way to live, love, eat, drink, and dress are very much alike.

Yet every household has two next-door neighbours (except the end households, which have only one apiece), and every household will tell you that its neighbours are most odd and surely not quite what they ought to be. Nothing is known about them for certain, because it is difficult to see from one window

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into another and because the garden fence is high. As a rule, not even the name of the oddities is known, though it may have been ascertained that they have a little girl called Elsie who is rude and rowdy and shockingly brought up. But the household can join one bit of evidence to another, add two and two together (and make either four or fourteen)! The neighbours neglect their garden, or they waste their whole lives in cultivating their absurd garden; they play the wrong tunes at the wrong times on the piano; their gramophone is dreadful (cheap, or the wrong needles); they rise at such weird hours; they never go to bed, or they are always in bed; the husband takes strange trains to business, and he has to run to his train, or, being ridiculously methodical, he reaches the station leisurely and too early; or he has no apparent business or means of livelihood. The wife shops at the wrong shops; or she goes to the right shops, in which case it is said: "*She* knows how to get value for her money, she does! Hard as nails!" Then the window curtains—you never saw such window curtains; and the funny parcels that are delivered at the house! And the servants . . . why do they stay, or

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why does the mistress tolerate them ? And what can be the explanation of that singular noise which is heard every night at eleven o'clock ? And so on and so on. There never were such persons, such an inexplicable family !



Thus speaks No. 10 of No. 9 and No. 11. (But No. 10 does not realise, or cannot believe, that No. 9 is speaking in precisely the same manner of No. 10 and No. 8.)

The whole street from end to end is populated by nice, normal people who are also odd, dubious people ! Suspicion reigns in the street. There are no definite accusations. Oh no ! One must be just, and it is unfair to jump to conclusions. But one has to be careful. One prudently looks the other way when one meets the enigmatic neighbour. One says that it is wiser not to make an acquaintance which might lead to undesirable sequels ; and that one never knows, and that one has heard tell of frightful things, and that—in short—it is more safe to keep oneself to oneself. And so each household develops more and more the character of an island of rectitude surrounded by water of the doubtful and the despicable.

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You will say that the above picture is a gross exaggeration. It is not a gross exaggeration ; but I admit that it is an exaggeration. I have exaggerated purposely, in order to emphasise and make the point clear. Nobody acquainted with the life of streets of houses—far more interesting and baffling than the life of bees or beavers, to whose study so much brain-power has been devoted—will fail to recognise the essential truth hiding amid my exaggerations.



The complementary picture is a picture of a series of homes occupied by little groups of related people who, although continually getting on each other's nerves, are obstinately engaged in keeping themselves to themselves. They have at least two rooms which are never full or even half full, and at least a dozen chairs which never bear the weight of a human being, and which are not interesting to look at and cannot be employed as beds, cupboards, or bookcases. They have indeed all the apparatus for comfortable human companionship with other homes—and they do not use it. They have the need of intercourse with other homes—and by the pride of their souls and the wilfulness of their minds they do all they can

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to discourage intercourse. From lack of enterprise and faith in mankind they deprive themselves of the greatest and most beneficial and the cheapest of all social distractions, thus for ever narrowing their lives and nourishing the sinister and insidious plant of boredom. And there they all are (existing, not living) in rows and rows of little solitudes, equivalent to desert isles, up and down all sorts of streets !

And this picture also is exaggerated, and this picture also is essentially true. I do not mean that no families have friends, nor that no threshold is ever crossed by visitors. But it is within my own knowledge that some thresholds are never crossed by visitors, and that some families have no friends whatever. And further, I maintain that the large majority of families have not nearly enough friends—in other words, that the marvellous institution of friendship is very inadequately exploited by the generality of citizens.



Nevertheless, I am not about to suggest that No. 10, for example, should some Sunday afternoon put on its best clothes and present itself at the threshold of No. 11, for example, and say :

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“ We desire to extend our acquaintance with the world, and therefore, while we are convinced that you are very odd people, we are convinced also that you must have some good points of interest to us, and accordingly we have arrived to pay a call and take a more intimate look at you, to the end that later on you may pay a call and take a more intimate look at ourselves. But we beg to reserve judgment.”

Sometimes that is just what visitors do say with their eyes, even if their lips say something else.

In practice you cannot thus invade your next-door neighbour's house in a large town, and indeed I would not have you offer any direct advance to your next-door neighbour. I would only have you abstain from deliberately avoiding the casual opportunities which come at intervals for an amiable encounter. I mentioned the next-door neighbour simply to illustrate more dramatically my point about homes being desert isles when they ought to be centres of social interchange. It is seldom that the actual next-door neighbour happens to have in him the raw material of a bosom crony. But he is a type and index of other

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individuals who do have in them that raw material.



You may ask :

“Why should I be bothered to make acquaintances ? I have enough to do to look after my own affairs without looking into other people’s.”

To which question there are two answers. First, unless you are unusually situated you haven’t enough to do in looking after your own affairs. A vast number of mature and respectable persons, if not the majority, go to bed too early simply because they find the evening tedious from lack of occupation. They can think of nothing else to do, and so they go to bed. A doctor in large general practice once told me that his experience had taught him that people slept too much. Indeed, he said more. His phrase was : “They sleep themselves stupid.” And I am convinced that this is the fact.

And the second answer is that there is no suggestion of being “bothered” with acquaintances. You don’t make acquaintances with a view to improving their eternal welfare, but with a view to improving your own. Your

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scheme is, very properly, to get something out of them, not to give them something. It is true that you do give them something—no doubt as much as you get. It is true that when acquaintance has developed into friendship you may have the rare and precious opportunity to render help in misfortune without receiving anything back at all,—than which there can be no more satisfactory experience. But all that is by the way. You make acquaintances in order to keep yourself alive. Millions of dead individuals go to and fro in the world, and do not suspect that they are dead. Nevertheless they are dead—because they are not alive. And you make acquaintances in order that they may pull you out of yourself, out of your self-complacency, out of your certainty that your views are the only right views.

Nearly all friendless people—I mean those who might have friends but won't—are opinionated, narrow-minded, disdainful, in addition to being half-blind and half-deaf. Contact, the friction of contact, is needed to stimulate life and to sharpen sensations. It is as beneficial as massage to the body.

Again, if you happen to be the head of a

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household with an uprising family, and you do not cultivate friendships because you don't want to be disturbed in your everlasting doze, how do you expect the boys, and especially the girls, to meet the mates whom they are entitled to meet and ought to meet? I have known heads of families who, having steadfastly discouraged acquaintance-making for a quarter of a century, have had the nerve superiorly to twit their daughters with being old maids! Whereas those heads of families ought for their wicked negligence to have worn sackcloth publicly in their city trains.

But none of the above reasons is the real reason for creating a circle of friends. The real reason is that it is amusing, distracting, interesting to do so. The real reason is seldom a moral one—and why should it be? To be “interested in people,” curiously and benevolently interested, not censoriously interested, is one of the finest resources that a man possesses against ennui and the disappointingness of life.



There are those who say that they cannot find suitable people to make friends of. These persons remind me of the persons who cannot

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earn a living, who are chronically out of a situation. Both sorts lack the necessary desire. What you sufficiently desire to do, you will do. I do not believe that desire creates that which it wants. Nor do I believe in what is called by mysterious professors of mind "the power of thought." When somebody tells me he wished so powerfully overnight for a five-pound note that he found one miraculously lying on his window-sill the next morning, I would not address him as a liar, but I would say that he had been strangely favoured by coincidence.

For me the practical value of desire lies in the fact that it keeps your eyes open to opportunities, and, the opportunities seen, it forces you to explore them ; and the practical value of desire lies in nothing else.

If, by thoroughly convincing yourself of the general advisability of making friends, you have developed the desire for friends, friends you will assuredly procure. How ? Well, it is impossible to say. One's friends arrive by the most surprising roads, as the history of friendship shows. "I never imagined, when I first met you, that we should become such friends." A common phrase ! And the more

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frank and intimate will even say sometimes : “ At first I couldn’t see such a great deal *in* you ”—meaning that they hadn’t been able to see anything in him at all. A not unusual occurrence !

Of course some people are handicapped. For example, those who have to tear up their roots and go to live among strangers in a strange place. Yet have I known people go into a strange place, and friends for them would seem to spring up out of the ground—not because they were wealthy or generous, but because they were obviously interested in their fellow-creatures.

Another handicap is the secret conviction of one’s own dullness and unattractiveness. Now I will not say that there are no dull persons on earth ; but I will say that I have never known one. Some people are more interesting, some people are less interesting, but all people are interesting ; and the man who is convinced that he can interest nobody ought to try hard to get rid of this absurd and disastrous delusion. Every spirit has its fellow, and most spirits have hundreds and thousands of fellows. Your town is full of your fellow-spirits. But to get at them you

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must have faith in yourself. It is a terrible scourge to think, as too many of us do, that in some mysterious way we are unique and cut off from mankind. Nobody is unique. Everybody has points of sympathy with everybody else. All social existence proves this.



An acquaintance is a fish hooked ; a friend is a fish landed. Landing a fish is an art by itself. Having made use of the metaphor, I will drop it and employ another one for a moment. Friendships are not like mushrooms—they cannot healthily grow in a night. “Easy come, easy go,” is a maxim that applies as well to friendships as to money.

The tendency is often to rush into a friendship, to take the acquaintance by storm and then to invest him, in one’s fancy, with all the fine qualities known to exist in humanity.

Some people fall into friendship as some other people fall in love. The chosen friend is for them the pearl of created beings. His good characteristics are superlatively good, and even his bad characteristics are somehow good. There never was another like him. In short, he is perfection.

The whole process of this delusion is very

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dangerous. For the delusion never lasts and cannot last. Just as the lover at length sees his love as she actually is, so will the hasty friend-maker see the friend as he actually is. And then the process of disillusion is as painful as the process of delusion was glorious—nay, more painful.

Move towards friendship slowly; move cautiously, for the sake both of your own dignity and of your place in the friend's esteem. It is not well that he should look down on you for over-eagerness, or that he should infer from your demeanour that you are starving for friends, or that he should despise your judgment. In your enthusiasm do not burn your boats. Keep open a line of retreat. For you may discover that you are in an impossible position in regard to him. He may develop into a nuisance, an affliction, a plague, an incubus, a nightmare, a perfect poison. And if this comes to pass, and you have set him on a throne and flung bouquets at him and chanted pæans to him, what are you going to do about it? You are helpless. He has acquired dominion over you.

Of course you might throw him out of the house, or bolt the front door in his face, or

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send him a note to say that he was the greatest disappointment of your life ; but pride would prevent you from any of these acts, for to dismiss him would be to admit that you were a bad judge of men, and you would die in agony sooner than admit such a thing. How many such tragedies as I have sketched have happened ! The annals of social life are strewn with them.

Remember that if the budding friend frequents your society he does so because he finds you attractive. Do not cheapen your attractiveness. Do not give it away. Set a price on it. Friendship is a bargain. All which sounds material, calculating, gross ; but is in truth merely prudent and a safeguard against calamity. Friend-making is always a great adventure, with vast possibilities of good and also of evil. Therefore guard as carefully as you can against the possibilities of evil.



Another axiom for friend-makers. Do not criticise the fellow-spirit. Do not take advantage of a growing intimacy to try to improve that particular specimen of humanity. (Except, of course, by the force of silent example.)

Some people have a marked and exasperating tendency to "take in hand" their

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friends and do them good. It is as if they said to their friends :

“Now you are splendid ; but if you follow my advice you will be still more splendid. I want you to be perfect because you are my friend. Let us round off this corner. Let us fill out that hollow ; let us stiffen up that weak spot ; and all will be well. I am treating you as a true friend. I am treating you for your own good. You ought really to be pleased that you have fallen into my kind, helpful hands.”

Women especially are inclined to affect this attitude. It is, as a rule, nothing but impudence ; and it discloses a horrid lack of humour. In friend-making you are not “out” to uplift the human race. You are out to appreciate and find pleasure in the human race. Your “lay” is not the moral lay. Hence what you have to do is to take the friend as he is, to select the best parts of him, to give him the best parts of yourself, not to disturb the rest, and to leave well alone.

If you absolutely must strive to bring humanity to perfection, you had better join one of the ten thousand societies which exist for that laudable and unattainable purpose,

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instead of practising informally upon the defenceless creature on your own hearth. Friendship is not an occasion for mutual improvement ; it is an occasion for mutual enjoyment. The enjoyment itself, without conscious aid from either of the parties, will work all the good, the improvement, and the uplift of which any friendship is capable. Judge not. Delight in. Luxuriate in. Any other course is only too liable to take the bloom off an exquisite fruit.



And another axiom for friend-makers. Friendship is more than intimacy, for enemies can be intimate, and in fact the deadliest enemies are often intimate enemies. But, though friendship is more than intimacy, it does involve intimacy. Intimacy involves confidences, self-revelations. You must, if you are to derive the full benefit from friendship, give as much confidence as you receive, and reveal as much as is revealed to you.

And yet there are a number of over-canny or cowardly persons who will ingeniously draw forth confidences and self-revelations without rendering anything of the sort in return. No friendship can yield the maximum results in

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these conditions, which inevitably more or less stultify the relationship by producing secret resentments on one side and accumulating undue reserves on the other. Both the resentments and the reserves are toxic in their effect.

And yet another maxim. Do not present any one with a monopoly of your friendship. There may be a friend-in-chief, but if there is, let him have a few rivals. It is not unknown that households exist which have only one friend. The householders have got him and, content with the feat of getting him, have closed down the enterprise of collecting friends. They will in all probability suffer. The chances are a hundred to one that the sole friend will abuse his exalted position. Freed from competition, he will go the way of all monopolists. He will become a tyrant; he will ruthlessly impose himself (though his exterior may be mild and his manners unexceptionable). He will intimidate. His preferences and his dislikes will govern the policy of the household. The members of the household will think twice about wiping their noses without previously consulting him, and nothing will overthrow him save death or a regular earthquake of a quarrel.

PUBLICITY FOR JOURNALISM

ARE journalists appreciated at their true value by the public whom they serve? The answer is that they are not. The daily paper is a daily miracle; and the public takes it up with no more awe than it takes up a slice of bacon.

This indifference is due to ignorance and nothing else, for the public is always ready, even anxious, to wonder and admire. When a paper has accomplished some great stunt, such as chartering a fleet of aeroplanes to bring Londonwards pictures of a prize fight in Peru at an average speed of ninety miles an hour, the public is amazed and full of worship—for about ten minutes. But show it a sub-editor and it will see merely a tired man in that marvellous person. Indeed, the public doesn't know what a sub-editor is, and generally thinks he is the assistant-editor, a sort of grand vizier to the sultan, the editor; a notion to make any sub-editor smile in the sardonic way in which sub-editors do smile.

Does the simple public realise the immense power over its thought-perspective of the anonymous gentleman who nightly decides

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what item is to have the place of honour on the principal news page, what adjectives are to be applied to the said item, what other items are to be compressed into obscure corners, what items are to be shut out entirely ? Does it realise the subtle, secret influence upon them of the genius who has to cut three inches out of a ten-inch story ? Does it realise what a thorn in the flesh to the news-editor is the advertisement-manager, and *vice versa* ? Does it realise that the contents of a paper have to be compelled to dovetail into each other like the parts of a Chinese puzzle, and that it is not by chance and the benevolence of heaven that a story ends exactly where it does end—not a line sooner nor a line later ?

Does it realise that the contents of a paper must fit the acreage of the pages far more accurately than a boot fits a foot ? Does it realise that an editor always has more matter than he can find room for ? Does it realise that when the way of the world has been inexcusably eventless for twenty-four hours the newspaper men have to set to work to paint it and dress it and adorn it till it has the air of positively vibrating with vast happenings ?

Does it realise that time is of the very

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essence of the whole business, that even if a comet hits the earth the parcelled papers must be in the motors and carts at a given instant without fail ? Does it realise that a celebrity who has the bad taste to die unexpectedly at 10 p.m. may upset the carefully co-ordinated labours of a hundred human beings and cast a huge building into dismay and confusion ? Does it realise that the phrasing of a headline or a contents-bill often depends on the number of letters in the words ? Does it realise . . .



But I must not continue the catalogue, of which, indeed, I have yet mentioned only a few details, and those by no means the most important and the most fundamental.

Anyhow, the answer in every case is : “ No, the public does not realise.”

My point is, that the ignorance of the public in these high matters is the fault of journalists themselves. An editor will send a man a hundred and fifty miles to get the first-hand story of some ridiculous crime or accident, while within his own walls he has a living, thrilling, sensational organism, an account of which the public would read with eagerness and delight. Every newspaper ought to give

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at intervals an account of this or that branch of its organisation, mechanical and otherwise, of its development and progress, of its difficulties and its achievements. No feature could be more popular. If, instead of offering money prizes for the correctest prophecies of football results, the paper would give to the winning prophets an order of admission to make an "accompanied tour" of the paper's premises while its football edition was actually being prepared and sent to press and whisked out into the streets, the ensuing mouth-to-mouth publicity would be enormous, and the ultimate gain in circulation very enheartening. And at no cost! (The proprietors of a big department store would give five hundred pounds for similar publicity—and jump at it!)

There need be no fear about uncovering mysteries. The more such mysteries are uncovered, the more wondrous will they appear, the more prestige will they acquire in the lay mind. After a few such doses administered to the public, it would no longer be true to say of the man in the street that :

A journalist by Thames's brim,
A yellow journalist was to him,
And it was nothing more.

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No! Journalists would be followed by gaping crowds down Fleet Street. The trouble with journalism—and I have always said it—is that journalists are too modest and retiring. The remedy is with themselves.

IS THE NOVEL DECAYING ?

IF I have heard it once I have heard it fifty times during the past year, the complaint that no young novelists with promise of first-rate importance are rising up to take the place of the important middle-aged. Upon this matter I have two lines of thought :

What makes a novel important enough to impress itself upon both the discriminating few and the less discriminating many ? (For first-class prestige is not obtained unless both sorts of readers are in the end impressed.) The first thing is, that the novel should seem to be true. It cannot seem true if the characters do not seem to be real. Style counts ; plot counts ; invention counts ; originality of outlook counts ; wide information counts ; wide sympathy counts ; but none of these counts anything like so much as the convincingness of the characters. If the characters are real, the novel will have a chance ; if they are not, oblivion will be its portion.

The Sherlock Holmes stories have still a certain slight prestige. Because of the ingenuity of the plots ? No. Because of the convincingness of the principal character ?

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No. The man is a conventional figure. The reason is in the convincingness of the ass Watson. Watson has real life. His authenticity convinces every one, and the books in which he appears survive by reason of him. Why are *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After* the most celebrated of Dumas' thousand volumes? Many other novels of Dumas have very marvellous and brilliant plots. For instance, *Monte Cristo*. But the Musketeer volumes outshine them easily, because of the superior convincingness of the characters. Why is Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* a better book than his *Main Street*? Because in the latter the chief character (heroine) is a sentimental stick, while in the former the chief character, Babbitt himself, is a genuine individual that all can recognise for reality.



To render secure the importance of a novel it is necessary that the characters should clash one with another, so as to produce strong emotion, first in the author himself and second in the reader. This strong emotion cannot be produced unless the characters are *kept* true throughout. [You cannot get strength out of falsity.] The moment the still small

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voice whispers to the reader about a character, "He wouldn't have acted like that," the book is imperilled. The reader may say: "This is charming. This is amusing. This is original. This is clever. This is exciting." But if he also has to say, "It's not true," the success of the book cannot be permanent.

The foundation of good fiction is character-creating, and nothing else. The characters must be so fully true that they possess their own creator. Every deviation from truth, every omission of truth, necessarily impairs the emotional power and therefore weakens the interest.

"I think that we have to-day a number of young novelists who display all manner of good qualities—originality of view, ingenuity of presentment, sound commonsense, and even style. But they appear to me to be interested more in details than in the full creation of their individual characters. They are so busy with states of society as to half-forget that any society consists of individuals; and they attach too much weight to cleverness, which is perhaps the lowest of all artistic qualities. I have seldom read a cleverer book than Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, a novel which has made

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a great stir in a small world. It is packed and bursting with originality, and it is exquisitely written. But the characters do not vitally survive in the mind, because the author has been obsessed by details of originality and cleverness. I regard this book as characteristic of the new novelists who have recently gained the attention of the alert and the curious; and I admit that for myself I cannot yet descry any coming big novelists.

But nevertheless—and here is my second line of thought—I am fairly sure that big novelists are sprouting up. Only we do not know where to look for them. Or we cannot recognise them when we see them. It is almost certain that the majority of the great names of 1950 are writing to-day without any general appreciation. They have not been spotted as winners by the sporting prophets, and publicity paragraphs are not published about them. Few or none recognised the spring of greatness in the early Hardy, or in the early Butler, or in the early George Moore, or in the early Meredith. And there is scarcely a permanently great name in the whole history of fiction who was not when he first wrote overshadowed in the popular and even in the

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semi-expert esteem by much inferior novelists. The great did not at first abound in glitter and cleverness. As a rule they began by being rather clumsy, poor dears ! Hence I am not pessimistic about the future of the novel.

MARCEL PROUST

Two of the contributors to the recent Proust memorial number of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* remind me that I met Marcel Proust many years ago at a Christmas Eve party given by Madame Edwards (now Madame José Sert) in her remarkable flat on the Quai Voltaire, Paris. (Not that I needed reminding.) With some eagerness I turned up the year, 1910, in my journal. What I read there was this: "Doran came on Sunday night for dinner. We went on to Misia Edwards' 'Réveillon' and got home at 4 a.m." Not a word more! And I cannot now remember a single thing that Proust said.

I have, however, a fairly clear recollection of his appearance and style: a dark, pale man, of somewhat less than forty, with black hair and moustache; peculiar; urbane; one would have said, an æsthete; an ideal figure, physically, for Bunthorne; he continually twisted his body, arms, and legs into strange curves, in the style of Lord Balfour as I have observed Lord Balfour in the restaurants of foreign hotels. I would not describe him as self-conscious; I would say rather that he was

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well aware of himself. Although he had then published only one book, *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*—and that fourteen years before—and although the book had had no popular success, Proust was undoubtedly in 1910 a considerable lion. He sat at the hostess's own table and dominated it, and everybody at the party showed interest in him. Even I was somehow familiar with his name. As for *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*, I have not read it to this day.

A few weeks before his death, while searching for something else in an overcrowded bookcase, I came across my first edition of *Du Côté de chez Swann*, and decided to read the book again. I cared for it less, and I also cared for it more, than in 1913. The *longueurs* of it seemed to me to be insupportable, the clumsy centipedalian crawling of the interminable sentences inexcusable. The lack of form or construction may disclose artlessness, but it signifies effrontery too. Why should not Proust have given himself the trouble of learning to "write," in the large sense? Further, the monotony of subject and treatment becomes wearisome. (I admit that it is never so distressing in *Swann* as in the later volumes of *Guermites* and *Sodome et Gomorrhe*.) On

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the other hand, at the second reading, I was absolutely enchanted by some of the detail.



About two-thirds of Proust's work must be devoted to the minutiae of social manners, the rendering ridiculous of a million varieties of snob. At this game Proust is a master. (Happily he does not conceal that, with the rest of mankind, he loves ancient blood and distinguished connections.) He will write you a hundred pages about a fashionable dinner at which nothing is exhibited except the littleness and the naïveté of human nature. His interest in human nature, if intense and clairvoyant, is exceedingly limited. Foreign critics generally agree that the English novelist has an advantage over the French in that he walks all round his characters and displays them to you from every side. I have heard this over and over again in conversation in Paris, and I think it is fairly true, though certainly Balzac was the greatest exponent of complete display. Proust never "presents" a character; he never presents a situation; he fastens on one or two aspects of a character or a situation, and strictly ignores all the others. And he is scarcely ever heroical, as Balzac was always;

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he rarely exalts, and he nearly always depreciates—in a tolerant way.

Again, he cannot control his movements ; he sees a winding path off the main avenue, and scampers away further and further and still further, merely because at the moment it amuses him to do so. You ask yourself : He is lost—will he ever come back ? The answer is, that often he never comes back, and when he does come back he employs a magic but illicit carpet, to the outrage of principles of composition which cannot be outraged in a work of the first order. This animadversion applies not only to any particular work, but to his work as a whole. The later books are orgies of self-indulgence ; the work has ruined the *moral* of the author : phenomenon common enough.

Two achievements in Proust's output I should rank as great. The first is the section of *Swann* entitled "Un amour de Swann." He had a large theme here—love and jealousy. The love is physical and the object of it contemptible ; the jealousy is fantastic. But the affair is handled with tremendous, grave, bitter, impressive power. The one fault of it is that he lets Swann go to a *soirée musicale*

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and cannot, despite several efforts, get him away from it in time to save the interest of the situation entire. Yet in the *soirée musicale* divagation there are marvellous, inimitable things.

The second achievement, at the opening of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, is the psychological picture of the type-pederast. An unpromising subject, according to British notions! Proust evolves from it beauty, and a heart-rending pathos. Nobody with any perception of tragedy can read these wonderful pages and afterwards regard the pervert as he had regarded the pervert before reading them. I reckon them as the high-water of Proust.

Speaking generally, Proust's work declined steadily from *Swann*. *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* was a fearful fall, and as volume followed volume the pearls were strung more and more sparsely on the winding string. That Proust was a genius is not to be doubted; and I agree that he made some original discoveries in the byways of psychological fiction. But that he was a supreme genius, as many critics, both French and English, would have us believe, I cannot admit.

SHELLEY, FROM PARIS

M. ANDRÉ MAUROIS (justifiably admired in Britain as the author of *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*) has written a book called *Ariel ou la vie de Shelley*. It is a most diverting and instructive work. It is also quite short, probably not over 70,000 words, probably the shortest biography of Shelley ever written for persons of taste. All English written biographies are too long, even those by Boswell and Lockhart. Some of them are so long that they never end. The French are not as a race very interested in literature, but at any rate they have had the sense not to tolerate long biographies in several tomes weighing ten pounds a tome.

M. Maurois' book takes nearly the form of a novel. In his preface he implies that it somehow is a novel, though factually (and of course spiritually) true to life. He guarantees its truth by the statement that he has given to Shelley no phrase and no thought not to be found in Shelley's letters, his poems, or the memoirs of his friends. The guarantee is insufficient. Any journalist who knows his business can stick to facts, and, by omitting facts, produce

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a totally false impression. M. Maurois has omitted facts. He has omitted almost all the facts relating to Shelley the poet. His main interest is Shelley's domesticity, and he has handled the subject with gleeful, cruel, and tender irony. His style has not quite the polish of Voltaire's or Anatole France's, but it is elegant enough and urbane without mercy.



For myself, I know nothing except what one picks up from encyclopædias and reviews about the life of Shelley. I always suspected that the Shelley circle must be a queer lot, but I had no idea that they were so queer as M. Maurois beautifully shows them to have been. What a crew of fanatics, zealots, conscienceless idealists, simpletons, sex-ridden women, maladroit and pretentious dabblers in the great art of existing on earth! And the Godwins! My God! The Godwins! Byron perhaps comes out best. He was capable of behaving infamously, but in life he had a sense of style. Shelley had not, though according to Byron he could walk through a drawing-room with more style than anybody. He must have been fantastically terrible to live with.

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Some of his far-famed generosity strikes me as being worse than silly ; it approaches the criminal. His death was the direct consequence of inexcusable folly ; and instead of weeping for Adonais one is inclined to exclaim curtly : "The fellow asked for it."

Considered as a study in the essential frivolity of self-complacent theorists, M. Maurois' book is masterly, ruthless, side-splitting, absorbing. Naturally, as a novelist, he has simplified, and so sharpened, his major effects ; but not, I think, unfairly. I count his book as an antidote to Dowden. (Not that I have read Dowden, or ever shall, but one has one's notions of Dowden.) It is a pity that he has not handled Shelley the poet. The more I read Shelley the more I am convinced of his immense greatness, which to my mind exceeds the greatness of, for example, Keats. And I should have liked the chance of seeing my Anglo-Saxon estimate of it corrected by the sardonic Latin judgment of an ironist such as M. Maurois is.

THE SAFEGUARDING OF BRITISH MUSIC ACT

THE great international problem raised by the project for bringing the Vienna Opera Company (complete with orchestra) to London had not been settled when I made inquiries in high quarters just before sitting down to write at the end of January 1924. The one thing then certain was that amateurs of grand opera were very disturbed by the trade-union opposition to the visit. And they doubtless still are. I know that I shall be passionately aggrieved if the Vienna Opera Company does not ultimately appear in London. I have never heard it. It may disappoint me. Most continental opera companies have disappointed me ; and I state solemnly that, though I must have seen opera in at least twenty theatres outside Britain, I have seen as good performances in London as anywhere. Still, I want the Vienna Company to appear in London. In particular I want to see the *Rosenkavalier* conducted by Strauss and played and sung by Austrian artists, including a Viennese orchestra.

I say further that I shall be extremely resentful against the Musicians' Union and the

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Ministry of Labour if between them they for ever prevent the Viennese invasion; and my resentment will be shared by large numbers of opera-goers. How startling, novel, and delightful it would be to hear grand opera in London that had been adequately rehearsed!

The Musicians' Union assert that their members can play as well as any orchestral players in the world. I believe it; and I believe further that they play on better instruments. But this seems to me to be beside the point. The point here is, that even if all British players performed on their instruments as divinely as the late Désiré Lalande performed on the oboe and the cor anglais, the Viennese conductors could not possibly get as Viennese a performance out of them as they get out of their Austrian horde. And a stabilised orchestra (not a floating population with a proportion of gifted persons who pay deputies to attend rehearsals for them), under its habitual conductors, constitutes an artistic entity which is just as individual as a Chaliapine and ought to have the same right of entry into a free country as a Chaliapine has.



The economic factor should, if at all possible,

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be kept out of an artistic problem, and in the present case the economic factor cannot indeed count, for there is, I am told and the Musicians' Union admit, practically no unemployment among the Union members. Employers of orchestral players have assured me that the supply of them is not equal to the demand. Which cannot be said of conductors.

No trade union of British conductors exists—why not?—but if a union did exist it would assuredly declare that unemployment among its members was acute and that the matter urgently demanded attention. Similarly no trade union of British solo instrumentalists exists, but if a union did exist it would assuredly declare that unemployment among its members was acute and that the matter urgently demanded attention.

The Musicians' Union, however, bears the misfortunes of conductors and solo artists with admirable fortitude. It does not make common cause with the conductors and the solo artists to exclude the job-filching foreigner from these musical shores. A recent Philharmonic season, for example, comprised six concerts, three of which were conducted by foreigners, while at least a dozen good, sound,

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British conductors have to spend their evenings at home reading scores. Has the Musicians' Union revolted against this monstrous infraction of the Safeguarding of British Music Act? Has it given an ultimatum to Sir Hugh Allen? Has it announced that it will not permit British conductors to starve? Has it struck?

But the Musicians' Union may argue that the Philharmonic is ruled by an oligarchy, and that it really cannot be responsible for the shocking anti-British policy of the Philharmonic, etc. etc. True. Then let us take the London Symphony Orchestra, which I understand to be a democratic enterprise run by orchestral players themselves. A recent season of the L.S.O. season comprised ten concerts. Seven out of these ten concerts were conducted by foreigners, and *all* the solo instrumentalists were foreigners. Further, only two British composers were represented in the whole prospectus.

The protest of the Musicians' Union against the importation of foreign players ought not to induce resentment in the breast of the musical public. It ought to induce contempt. It does.



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The protest of the British National Opera Company is on a different plane. I am not sure that the B.N.O.C. has had justice in its brief career. I do not mean from the Press, which too often has printed about it that most futile of all forms of criticism, the patriotic-laudatory. I mean from the "keen" musical public in private talk—such talk being probably more influential in the long run than any other propaganda. I dare say that I have inveighed as bitterly as anybody against the defects of the B.N.O.C. performances—and I cannot guarantee that I will not inveigh again. The best parts of these representations are some of the conducting, some of the individual singing, and some of the orchestral playing. The worst are the entire staging, which is appalling and seems to get more and more reactionary and stupid; the chorus work, which for woodenness, thinness of tone, and comprehensive inefficiency rivals that of a fashionable West End musical comedy; and some of the orchestral playing. But the general level is not lower than the continental, certainly not lower than that of Paris and Milan. The B.N.O.C. has some positive artistic achievements to its credit, and if it has done

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nothing whatever for the artistic renaissance of opera, being content apparently to deepen the old ruts at a period when opera-production is crying out for reform, we can scarcely blame the managers.

For the managers have initiated a truly enormous enterprise, in face of colossal difficulties. The enterprise, as such enterprises go, is still in its infancy. Our expectations concerning it should be modest. On the whole it is entitled to say that it is coming through. Of course it cannot hope to count very seriously in the mundane movement of music until it appoints to itself a supreme artistic director.¹ The absence of such an official is the chief flaw in its constitution ; when this is remedied, and not before, we may be able honestly to apply to its results some adjective other than "respectable." In the meantime we must be sympathetic and patient, taking the good and leaving the bad. So much for the artistic side.



The protest of the B.N.O.C. against Viennese importations is purely economic. It is said that a Viennese season would ruin the British

¹ This has since been done.

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season. Now here we have to bear in mind that the B.N.O.C. has set out to do what no organisation has ever yet succeeded in doing anywhere in the world—to wit, make grand opera pay. Grand opera never has in the long run paid. For example, before the war the Paris Opera gave about 200 performances a year and lost about £400 per performance. The State made the taxpayer provide this deficit on the pleasures of the enlightened—and rightly! Whether it frequents the opera or not, a nation ought to pay for opera. Heaven knows what the New York Metropolitan annually costs its backers!

There are people of great expert knowledge who affirm that to make grand opera pay is impossible. The B.N.O.C. has not yet made grand opera pay; nevertheless, it has come nearer to making it pay than we could reasonably have anticipated. It may or may not succeed in its endeavour, but if it succeeds it must succeed in natural conditions. To succeed only in artificial conditions would be to fail.

The B.N.O.C. cannot fairly say to the nation :

“ Look here, we lost £1, 17s. 6d. last season,

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and hence we ordain that you shall have no opera but ours.”

It might as well have said to engine-drivers :

“ We forbid you to strike because in doing so you injure our nightly receipts, and we are most laudably engaged in the furtherance of British art.”

The argument is human ; but it is specious and absurd. If the Viennese visit would have killed the B.N.O.C., then either the B.N.O.C. is not worth keeping alive or the British public is not worthy of the B.N.O.C. For myself I do not believe for a moment that the Viennese visit would have killed the B.N.O.C. The B.N.O.C. might have lost some income for a while, but all public entertainers must be prepared sometimes to drop money. It is their privilege. On the other hand, the Viennese visit would unquestionably have stimulated the taste for opera in this country. The B.N.O.C. might have learned something from it, and quite conceivably the B.N.O.C. might have emerged brilliantly from the comparison and so have gained *kudos*, which ultimately means a bank balance.

THE PERFECT FOOL

A CLASSIC theatre, a beautiful auditorium, crowded in every part with people of whom quite a fair proportion know what they are about when they listen to an opera. Royalty in the royal box, with luscious flowers offered by a management conscious of the occasion. The first night of the British operatic season, and the first performance of a new opera by Gustav Holst, a mature British composer whom we all admire very much, some of us enthusiastically, religiously. Apparition of Eugene Goossens, young, pale (not from fright but from habit), knowing the whole job, expert, highly gifted, comprehending, self-reliant, inspiring confidence, in a word—our pet. We stand up. *God Save the King*—with some of the instruments decidedly off the beat at first. We sit down. A “Fugal Overture”—not that the fugality of the thing was very plain to me. A pause. It is nearly as exciting as the start of Beckett *v.* Carpentier. The curtain rises. . . .

Less than an hour and a half later the matter is over and the auditorium empty. And in the dingy foyer and on the grand staircase of

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the vast and historic shanty, to be kept lighted for an hour so that the initiated may discourse at length to one another upon what they have just witnessed, the quidnuncs, journalistic and others, are pacing up and down chattering tentatively and wondering what in God's name they ought to say; and the knowledgeable, possessing taste, standards, convictions, are moodily silent. For the applause at the end, though generous and prolonged, lacked passion.



However, there was no mystery at all about the affair, except for the quidnuncs, most of whom, playing for safety, rushed off to Fleet Street and wrote high-falutin' laudation as hard as they could for thirty minutes. Holst had had an idea for a musical skit, which skit was to take off all current opera from perhaps Donizetti to perhaps Stravinsky. Yes, it was a most excellent idea, in which around the magic-potion theme circled magicians, troubadours, parsifals, wanderers, erdas, princesses, and spirits. And he had laid out the plan of it pretty well for the stage, displaying a certain scenic sense, which only failed him in one or two not unimportant details of construction. Nobody, for instance, in the whole auditorium

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believed for a moment that the magician would really have been such an ass as to recount the powers of his potion to a talkative old woman, or, having done so, to leave the colossal beaker unguarded for about a quarter of an hour. And Holst was not well served by his producers. The high moments of the potion-drinking, with superb opportunities for ridiculing the first act of *Tristan*, were ruined by ineffective handling; ditto the nascent love of the princess for the parsifal. The scenery had nothing skittish, and displayed that exasperating admixture of black curtains and crude, chromographic realism which so gravely impaired the production of *Tristan* the previous year. The costumes were acutely Covent Gardenish, and not a bit skittish. The ballet was conventional and vapid (to adorable music). The lighting, I admit, was skittish—and I hope intentionally so.



The evening might have safely survived these drawbacks, if Holst had been well served by himself. He was not. I should be buried for ever in ridicule if I announced: "I shall write the libretto of an opera, and as I have my notions about music I may as well write

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the music too." Yet this, *mutatis mutandis*, is almost what Holst did. He has, of course, the general intelligence of a fine, creative artist, but when it comes to the point, he is a mere amateur at libretto writing. (He is worse even than the Wagner who committed the libretto of *The Twilight of the Gods*.) He simply does not possess the sense of words. He knows what is funny in life, but he does not know what is funny on the stage. He doubtless feels humorous and means to be humorous, but he cannot "get it over."

Further, all the performers seemed to be puzzled, seemed not quite to know what they were expected to aim at. They were rarely humorous, and never humorous with distinction. I would not blame them. They had an impossible task. If the joke as a whole fell flat, as it did, the reason was that it was bound to fall flat, because it was conceived on the wrong scale. Successful skits should not have the scale and apparatus of epics. You cannot in a skit effectively break a leviathan on a titanic, slow-revolving wheel. What you have to do is to make him squirm with a lively hat-pin. The *tempo* was too deliberate, the machinery too enormous, the pother too

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grandiose. The mountain was there all right, but the mouse was not even ridiculous. Nevertheless, the British National Opera Company did well to produce *The Perfect Fool*, and has thereby acquired merit. And nevertheless *The Perfect Fool* is incomparably the best modern British opera. So there you are, and you are requested to make what you can of the situation.

THE BIG SHOP

WHEN I was young my grandparents, uncle, and aunt kept a draper's shop, and I lived with them for years. So that I know something about shopkeeping from the inside. Perhaps this fact partly explains my keen and admiring interest in the activities of the modern big stores; but not wholly, for I have just the same interest in the big hotels, and as a child I certainly never lived in a hotel, nor did any of my relatives ever keep a hotel.

To my mind the big shops and the big hotels are among the most wonderful, picturesque, and characteristic social phenomena of this epoch, and I could not say which attracts me the more.

The arch-director of one of the largest London stores once took me into his secret bower, and briefly explained to me, with documentary aids, the working of his organisation. It did not amaze me, because I pretty well knew, from experience and observation, what to expect; but nevertheless it was miraculous.

I wished that some of the young or old ladies who, with all flags flying, sail through a

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big shop as nonchalantly as if they were cutting bread-and-butter, could be initiated into the mysterious creative activities that lie behind what their eyes devour.



Most customers take the big shop for granted. They see a huge building, full of various stock, and a staff of human beings (chiefly feminine) all ready to minister to their desires, and they do simply take the whole affair for granted—as if it had grown there the night before, like a mushroom.

They do not, for instance, reflect humbly upon even the acres of charring which must be daily accomplished by numerous persons (never seen), ere the place can decently unbar its doors to the public; probably they assume that the difference between the disordered and littered shop at six o'clock in the evening and the spick-and-span shop at nine o'clock in the morning is brought about by magic.

They put a question to an assistant, and never ask themselves how she gets into the shop, where she eats, where she sleeps, who taught her where everything in her department is, and the qualities of everything and the reasons for everything; who taught her how

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to phrase her replies with a view to lucrative business, and especially who taught her to smile amiably when a customer has turned an entire department upside down and bought nothing.

Again, they are apt to think of a big store as manned mainly by assistants behind counters. It does not occur to them that on the innumerable staff are people who live for nothing but the care of horses, people who live for nothing but electricity, people who live for nothing but cooking, people who live for nothing but motors, people who live for nothing but paper and string, people who live for nothing but tapping typewriters, people who live for nothing but rows and columns of figures, people who live for nothing but a post office, people who live for nothing but the dressing of windows, and people who live for nothing but the maintenance of discipline and mutual goodwill among people in somewhat trying conditions.

They see a full-page advertisement with a score or two of illustrations in a daily paper, and they do not reflect that every illustration has had to be carefully drawn according to minute instructions, and all the letterpress

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ingeniously composed by professional writers, and then the whole page fitted together like a Chinese puzzle and everything checked and the proof corrected,—I say nothing of the field-marshal who fights the battle of the price of advertisements with the newspaper owners !

They buy some object, and do not reflect that that object has to be replaced as quickly as possible, and that wishing will not replace it.

This brings me to the buyers, never seen, or if seen not recognised for the terribly important and brainy and highly-paid individuals they in fact are—the watchers of the markets of the world, the watchers of the changes in public taste, the courted of the wholesale houses, the supreme bargainers, the very keys of success or failure !



I will not continue in this strain. But I must mention what in my opinion is the greatest feat of these establishments : namely, the changing of the tone and spirit of shop-keeping.

In former days when you went into a British shop the demeanour of the persons in charge thereof plainly expressed the following idea :

“ Look here ! This is really rather annoying.

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Here's another of these customers coming in to bother us again ! Why can't they leave us alone ? ”

Or :

“ Now you will please understand, you customer, that we have certain things to sell, and only certain things, and if you don't like them you can leave them and clear out.”

Such a demeanour still lingers in a few small “ select ” West End shops, but the big stores have practically killed it. The demeanour of the big stores says :

“ Our scheme is to make all the money we can, but we know we can only do it by selling you what you want to buy, not what we want to sell. We may lose on some transactions, but we don't care. Our aim is to serve you, and nothing is too much trouble for us.”

The finest illustration of the new method is shown in an incident which so far as I know is now related for the first time in print. The waggish son of a famous sporting peer entered a very big stores and said to the first floor-walker he met :

“ I want to see some elephants, please.”

“ Certainly, sir,” replied the floor-walker, imperturbably. “ I will just telephone and

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find out if the manager of the wild animal department is in his office."

Presently the wag was ushered into an office.

"You wish to see some elephants, sir. African or Asiatic?"

"Asiatic," murmured the wag, somewhat frightened.

"Of course, we don't keep them here, sir, but I shall be happy to drive you down to the elephant stables at once if you can spare the time."

The wag was driven in a handsome car to a town some twenty miles out of London. A circus had encamped there, and the telegraph had been set to work. The wag inspected two elephants and inquired the prices—and looked foolish.

"I'll think it over," said he apologetically.

"Certainly, sir," said the official of the store. "We should not expect an immediate decision. It is one o'clock. May I offer you lunch at The Peacock before we start back?"

The wag had a free lunch and was delivered free at his own door. Much paying business of a more commonplace nature than elephants resulted from this episode, which breathed the very spirit of the modern store.



THE BIG SHOP

The charm of the big store springs from the fact that it is more than a universal shop—it is a universal exhibition, always open and always free. In material matters it keeps you up to date with the progress of the world, and in so far as it does so it is an education for everybody who enters. It is also a tonic and a stirrer of imagination and of ambition in the too sluggish breast.

You may, and generally do, go into a store to buy, but that is only a part of your aim. You go in order to watch human nature, to see what other people are buying, to compare your taste with other people's tastes, and to criticise both yours and theirs. You go, further, to see what you would like or would not like to buy, and what you would buy if you could afford to buy it. And if you emerge from the store disgusted with your own clothes or your own furniture, or your own gadgets and dodges for getting the most out of your daily home at the lowest possible cost—so much the better, for laudable ambition is then born in you.

There are individuals who assert that they hate shopping. Of them it is to be said, either they do not know what shopping is, or they

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have not acquired the technique of shopping, or they are blind and deaf to the great spectacle of the world, or they are paupers, or they are liars.

Fortunately the number of haters of shopping has creditably diminished within the last quarter of a century. The big stores by their insidious arts have seen to that. The big stores have transformed shopping into a pastime—perhaps dangerous, but a pastime.

We may wonder sometimes how if you buy a shilling's worth of firewood from them they can afford, besides delivering the sticks at your door in a five-ton motor-lorry, to offer you gratis a clubroom, an information bureau, a writing-room, notepaper, and a sort of permanent Wembley. But that aspect of the transaction need not trouble us. The big stores have thought it carefully out. The thing does indeed pay, and their dividends prove it.

We read of the marts of old—Tyre, Sidon, Rome, Venice—and we regret the departed picturesqueness of times past. But we need not regret it, and we ought to be ashamed to regret it. No mart of old could ever have rivalled in picturesqueness, in colour, in riches,

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in variety, and in fascination the big stores of the great cities of the world to-day.

No mart of old was ever fed by so many ships from such distant ports as the big stores of our era.

It is as certain as anything in the future can ever be that when this civilisation has fallen into ruins and ashes—as, of course, it must do sooner or later—the big stores, which we now take for granted, will be presented to the historical students of a few thousand years hence as incredible marvels of romance and vitality and enterprise, and those students will sigh because for them the age of miracles is long past.

INSOMNIA

THIS subject should not be handled lightly, nor without a kindly regard for the sensibility of the great fellowship of non-sleepers, who as a class or caste appointed to suffer receive far less sympathy than they deserve.

The victim of insomnia, having seen the slowness of dawn, arises with every nerve tattered and the capacity for happiness ruined. His morning is a desolation. After lunch nature is somewhat restored. After tea, though still weak, he is quite gay—as one delivered out of hell. And then comes the evening paper with the news that a very eminent medical authority refuses credence to the assertions of wakeful patients about their wakefulness. The resentment of the non-sleeper leaps up at such wantonness, and, relapsing, he is thrown back into the pit.

No eminent medical authority ought to express his total incredulity, and, even if he does, no reputable newspaper ought to publish it. Moreover, I suspect that this particular authority was misreported. Is the whole class to be counted as liars or self-deceivers because a man who said that he didn't sleep

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a wink all night is obliged to admit that he did not hear an express traction engine pass under his window at 5.0 a.m. ? Suppose that the eminent authority remarked superiorly to a sufferer, "How do *I* know that you were awake for hours ?" and the sufferer replied that he had read a hundred pages of a novel during the night, or had got up and smoked six cigarettes, or had got up and had a meal or walked five hundred times round his bedroom ! The eminent authority would surely have to change his tune.

Nevertheless, I admit that in all probability most bad sleepers are better sleepers than they think they are, and that in particular most bad sleepers who say they have not slept a wink all night are mistaken. Bad sleepers driven to despair will say nearly anything. I know a bad sleeper (otherwise sane) who is seriously convinced that for a whole year he never slept at all. It is extraordinarily difficult to be quite sure that one has not been to sleep. When there is any doubt on the point, one has slept ; this is certain.



If you have a quarters-chiming clock far enough away not to disturb you and near

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enough to be heard if you are awake, and if you hear every hour and every quarter strike throughout the night, then you may be fairly sure that you have not slept a wink ; but not quite sure ; you may have dozed half a dozen times.

It needs a practised judgment, unusual objectivity, an extraordinary freedom from bias, and a timepiece with illuminated hands, to gauge even approximately the quantity of sleep one has enjoyed in a given night. The intensity of the sense of fatigue and of irritability on rising from the rack is the surest test of the extent of wakefulness. And even this test is dangerously fallible. For fatigue is toxic in origin and toxic in effect. You may feel less tired after a four-hour night if the umbilical region is behaving itself than after a six-hour night if it is not. In fact, the solution of the problem of determining with any precision the amount of sleep enjoyed is as impossible as the definition of political honesty.

Still, I would maintain as axiomatic that people who believe themselves to be chronically bad sleepers are bad sleepers. Beyond doubt they have broken nights. And the

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notion that, the amount of sleep being equal, a broken night is as good as an unbroken night is merely silly.

Sound sleepers, though they may otherwise have poor health, are as odious as perfectly healthy persons. Their sympathetic imagination has been weakened by nocturnal prosperity. They do not understand, and in their arrogance and self-complacency they do not want to understand.



One of the most dreadful ordeals known to mankind, an ordeal calling for the highest qualities of fortitude and composure, is to wake up suddenly, night upon night, after an hour or two's sleep. One o'clock! Two o'clock! Three o'clock! "God! Another bad night! Another ruined morning!" Powerful is the mind that can keep control of itself in such crises!

The disorder may, and often does, become acute to the point of morbidity. As the sufferer at last feels sleep to be approaching he will develop a fatal and asinine curiosity concerning the mysterious process of going to sleep. His thoughts will run: "I am going off. In a moment or a minute I ought

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to be asleep. How horridly fascinating to watch the change, to try to follow it further than it can be followed !” . . . He is undone. Sleep has fled. The curiosity becomes an obsession. Madness is at the other end of that street. Again, the sufferer may get into such a condition of hopelessness and exhaustion that he cannot even attempt any of the sleep-inducing devices known to bad sleepers. He simply lies there, beaten.

I doubt if there is any remedy for insomnia considered as insomnia. Sleeplessness is a symptom of disease, not the disease itself. It can only be cured indirectly and by specialised professional skill. Few bad sleepers realise this. Just as a man with a weak heart will marvellously abstain from learning anything about that organ, so will the bad sleeper continue to sleep badly for decades without seriously inquiring into the root of the evil or causing it to be inquired into.

Palliatives of the symptom exist : monotonous repetitions, keeping the mind empty, food, warm drink, cold drink, warm bath, cold bath, physical exercises to restore the circulation of the blood, etc., etc. And some of them are sometimes temporarily effective.

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But none of them will cure the ailment of which insomnia is a symptom. All of them are in conception unscientific, empiric, quack, and come under the sinister classification of "muddling through." The idea of "inducing" sleep is absurd. Sleep ought not to have to be enticed like a frightened fawn. It should pounce on you like a tiger.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH

It is always great fun to compare the virtues, faults, and oddities of two neighbouring races. It always will be. One of the foremost French authorities on English character and habits, M. André Chevrillon, has recently been enjoying this fun.

M. Chevrillon calls his article "Our English," because he has selected for examination a typical English community in a hotel on the Riviera. He says, and rightly, that national characteristics are more easily judged in such surroundings than on the native soil of the specimens judged.

But, having chosen such a colony and having observed that the English remain English therein, he draws the conclusion that the English are English to a greater degree than the French, for example, are French, and that in the Englishman especially the national type prevails over the individual. Which seems to me a strange way of arguing. At any rate, I disagree with the conclusions.



The French quarter of London is far more French than the English quarters of Paris are

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English. You might walk a mile in the Montparnasse quarter and see nothing English except a few Britishers. You cannot walk a hundred yards in Soho without feeling that you are in a foreign city, much more foreign than the Chinese quarter in Limehouse. Then, in the matter of conforming to type, the French are to my mind the greatest conformers to type in civilised Europe.

Eccentricity is not tolerated in France. If a Frenchman wants to condemn a thing, he says first, "It isn't like anything else." This is a proverbial French phrase. Whereas the English are notoriously tolerant of the eccentric, and not half so socially critical as the French.

There are, of course, exceptions. M. Chevrillon says that before the war a few Germans would drive the English out of any Riviera hotel, not because they were Germans, but because at table they used a knife where the English use a fork. This is both true and amusing. The Englishman's ritual at table is the finest in the world, and he is a stickler for it.

An English Tory would stand the presence of a Bolshevik who ate correctly, but he would never stand the presence of another Tory who outraged him by inserting a potato into the

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cavity on the end of a knife. No! You could not expect him to stand it. Nevertheless, the Englishman is rarely in himself so unalterably English as all Frenchmen, in no matter what environment, are French.



M. Chevrillon is more profound when he says that the Englishman is a "political animal." In no country, and certainly not in France, are politics loved and understood as in Britain. Frenchmen have always been hoodwinked by political adventurers. And they always imagine that every individual can "make a bit" out of the State. Only the Englishman understands that the State is himself. The Frenchman cannot comprehend that if he does not pay taxes he will have to pay in some other way rather more than he would have paid in taxes.

The French National Debt has been increasing steadily since 1870. I doubt whether any French Budget in fifty years has been genuinely balanced. Even the Great War did not cure the Frenchman of the extraordinary delusion that, *via* the State, you can get something for nothing.

At present the Frenchman can still boast

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that no Government is going to make him pay adequate taxes ; but somehow he does not perceive that his investments in national stock are worth only about a fifth of what they would be worth if he had paid adequate taxes.

As for the French failure to understand the fundamentals of foreign politics, I will merely remark, on this great and delicate subject, that when a Frenchman really wants to do something, or wants not to do something, he is quite incapable of conceiving any valid reason why he should not or should.

Finance is at the bottom of politics, and the Frenchman understands finance in one aspect only. He knows how to save money, but he is not very interested in making money. He is not very ambitious, nor adventurous. What he wants is security ; and just as this is always the cry of the individual, so it is the cry of the nation.

The Frenchman's skill in achieving individual security and family security is amazing ; it inspires awe. But its beneficent results are often much damaged by his failure to understand the principles of investment.

Financiers can, or could, unload wild-cat

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schemes on Paris that would have no chance whatever in London. After the Franco-Russian alliance French citizens, with astounding simplicity, put ten thousand million francs (when a franc *was* a franc) into Russia. Nearly all the money had vanished before the war ; it has now all vanished.



The fact is that the Frenchman is so absorbed in the individual or the family unit that he does not bring his brilliant wits to bear on anything beyond his own front door. And this, in another connection, is what prevents him from occupying himself intelligently with public charities and "movements." Imagine French hospitals being seriously supported by voluntary contributions !

But the intense individualism of the Frenchman has an important advantage in that it discourages him from forming those intolerable societies for meddling with other people's beliefs and conduct which are perhaps the second greatest curse of existence in Great Britain.



The Frenchman knows how to live.

He is a master of the art of social intercourse.

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When we say that English table manners are better than French, we ought to define what we mean by table manners. If we limit the definition of table manners to the manipulation of mouths, fingers, and metal instruments, we are right to feel superior. But I would hold that the most important part of table manners is conversation, and there the French are finished artists while we are fumbling amateurs.

Further, the French can be urbane without cultivating make-believe. Except when they want something very badly, they do not deny that things are what they are. They admit and discuss the facts of life. They have a proper intellectual contempt for hypocrisy, which is the first and greatest curse of existence in Great Britain.

PASSING OF THE PURITANS

THE adjective "Puritanical" is now a term of reproach, even of scorn. If you want the right to drink a glass of beer up to 11 p.m. and the licensing authorities forbid you to drink after 10 p.m., you call the authorities all sorts of bad names, including "puritanical." The noun "puritan," however, still retains its dignity among us—no doubt on account of the heroic history of the Puritans, whose greatest hero was Oliver Cromwell, and who, when Cromwell was no more, sailed off to America in search of religious freedom, and, without knowing it, began to create what is now the United States. There is a connection between sky-scrapers, prohibition, and puritanism.

The original Puritans were far less concerned with moral conduct than with the nature of Church ceremonies and Church discipline, but in men's characters one thing goes with another, and those who were sticklers about the liturgy were soon sticklers about conduct, and accordingly soon got themselves well hated by such free-living fellows as the Elizabethan dramatists. The puritan spirit had a bad time in the eighteenth

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century, but flourished powerfully under Queen Victoria. In my childhood, in the Midlands, I encountered the last glories of puritanism. I remember reading aloud to my grandmother a chapter from the Bible concerning the Pharaohs. By a slip of the tongue I said "Egpyt" instead of "Egypt." There was something funny about the sound of "Egpyt." I laughed and said it again. Whereupon considerable trouble arose with my grandmother. I was accused of lightness, of making mock of Holy Writ, and other crimes, and no doubt I was sent to bed so that I might by reflection reform myself. The incident well illustrates the decadence of puritanism.



At that period, as always, puritanism had two sides to it. On the one side, it undoubtedly did help to form and stiffen the character, to give strength of mind and the ability cheerfully to "do without." On the other side, it discouraged pleasure for the sake of discouraging pleasure. It was the enemy of pleasure. If anybody desired to do anything purely for his own joy, puritanism's first impulse was to find reasons why he should not.

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It stood out for the full rigour of its particular forms and ceremonies, and was extremely intolerant of other people's forms and ceremonies. Naturally it developed narrow-mindedness, bigotry, hypocrisy, and spiritual conceit. And it was by no means free from singular inconsistencies.

Thus it chastised bodily love with scorpions. One scarcely dared mention bodily love. And as to referring openly to the statistics of illegitimacy in puritan districts—you simply couldn't do it. But gross over-eating was permitted, indulged in, and frequently encouraged. The same with the heaping up of earthly treasure by wiliness and an excess of frugality. One of the endearing qualities of the puritans was that they were very human in their grimness and curiously elastic in their rigidity.

The puritans have fought hard to maintain the power of their ideals over a society which had grown restive under them. With one or two exceptions, they have failed. Puritan ideals may now be said to be confined to a small, if still active, minority. The change, to those who have lived through it, has been immense.

Hypocrisy has by no means vanished, but it is much diminished. There is far more

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liberty to say what you think ; which, after all, is one of the most precious privileges a man may enjoy. Far fewer topics are "forbidden." Indeed, scarcely any topic is forbidden. Colour and brightness have increased, though frocks have diminished nearly as much as hypocrisy. Daily repose has increased. Holidays have increased. Travel has increased. Boredom, once the scourge of the nation, and especially of the provinces, has decreased. Reading has increased. Pleasures have increased. I do not positively assert that all these things are the direct consequence of the decline of puritanism ; but they have, at any rate, accompanied it. The transformation of existence, even in the small villages, is wonderful, scarcely credible. As for the big towns, the big towns of the 'seventies and 'eighties would not recognise themselves to-day.



One may say that formerly the day was too long ; it is now too short. People are more alive ; their curiosity and their appetites have been broadened. Everywhere there is a refuge from tedium. Not so very long ago the sole refuge from tedium, for the great majority of men, was the bar and the bar-parlour, and

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for the great majority of women—nothing, nothing at all. Nor have these changes towards freedom and variety brought with them certain other changes which we should all regret. Crime has not increased; it has decreased. Brutality has most notably and spectacularly decreased. We hear much talk about sexual laxity, but the increase of talk is probably due to the increased freedom of speech, and not to an increase of laxity. Anyhow, the ratio of illegitimate births has strikingly decreased over a considerable period. That is not everything, but it is something. I imagine that morality is influenced less by high resolutions than by physical conditions—such as overcrowding or the reverse. Natural impulses, and the will to control them, remain fairly constant throughout the ages.

Again, health has improved. You will say that this is largely a consequence of the progress of science and common sense. I agree; but at the same time improved health is a presumption that the decline of puritanism has not deleteriously affected health. Change, variety, new interests, and the abolishing of ennui have perhaps been responsible in some degree for improved health and greater

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longevity. There are other factors than the physical in this mysterious matter.



Lastly, and perhaps most important, the position of women has improved; and I would assuredly attribute this chiefly to the spread of the general idea of freedom. Puritanism had something of the Oriental in its attitude towards women. In puritanism, next after theological strictness came strictness in regard to the relations of the sexes, and, of course, purity was imposed more severely on women than on men. Any actions, however innocent in themselves, which might bring even a suspicion on the immaculateness of women, were tabooed. The craze for propriety became merely ridiculous.

I can remember the years when ladies might ride inside an omnibus, but not outside, and when a woman who rode by herself in a hansom cab was thereby morally besmirched. And I have bicycled with a lady who was stoned by the populace of a suburb of London because she had so seriously unsexed herself as to dare to move from one part of the earth's surface to another on a pair of steel wheels. Here was a symptom of the effects of puritanism at its most malignant and most mis-

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guided. Any change from it must of necessity have been for the better. Withal, the increase of freedom has undoubtedly involved changes for the worse. Comfort has mightily increased, and this is a matter for congratulation, but luxury in some circles of society has assumed the proportions of the grotesque, the silly, and the insane. Individuals have said to themselves : “ What can we do to be more luxurious ? ” And they have racked their brains and done things that were fatuous ; things that were an affront to the decency of the commonwealth.



Industry has decreased. This is true of all classes—employers as well as employed. It is conceivable that formerly people worked too hard, worked for the sake of the labour itself, devastated their lives with work. But now it is conceivable that people do not work hard enough. Efficiency in machinery and in organisation has provided some remedy for decrease of industry—if we worked as hard to-day as we did forty years ago our prosperity might surpass the most wondrous dreams—but no material efficiency can provide a remedy against the moral disadvantages of undue idleness, slackness, and shirking.

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The fundamental difference between the past epoch and the present seems to me to be as follows. In the (comparatively recent) past we thought less of enjoyment than of security. Not only did we frown upon pleasure as a sin of wickedness and licence,—we sacrificed it deliberately in our youth and our middle age in order that we might enjoy it in our old age. And of course we never did properly enjoy it in our old age, because the capacity to enjoy is always impaired by age. We were always preparing to enjoy and never enjoying. Nay more, we not infrequently killed ourselves in the effort to obtain security, and if we survived the effort we had a habit of dying immediately the period of secure enjoyment had begun. To-day we say : “ I want to enjoy now. Why should I sacrifice the certainty of enjoyment to-day for the uncertainty of enjoyment to-morrow ? ” We favour the present at the expense of the future. We say : “ A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and certainly worth more than one in the bush.” Here are two opposing schools of philosophy, each of them as old as civilisation, and perhaps older. Both schools have their dangers.

MIND-WORK

I AM not a believer in the goodness of the "good old times," which many people begin to get mournfully enthusiastic about when they are past fifty. Indeed, I feel sure that every single one of those people, if they were suddenly thrust back into the alleged-to-be-good old times, would very soon be moving heaven and earth to return at the earliest possible instant to the despised present.

Still, most periods have their defects, as compared with other periods; and I think that if our own period has defects, one of the principal of them is its inability to practise the important art of sustained thinking. We seem to be unable to concentrate our minds for long—even on our pleasures or distractions.

Only sixty or eighty years ago epic poems, for instance, were quite common, as anybody can discover by rummaging over second-hand bookstalls. Also they had good sales. To-day epics are as rare as fine summers, and when one appears it usually dies like a midge on the day of its birth, and literary critics read as little of it as they must in order to dispraise it.

Take novels. One hundred thousand words

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is more than the average length of a modern novel. And a novel of 200,000 words is regarded as prodigious. But some of the greatest novels of the past comprise not far short of a million words ; and the classic Victorian novels ran to 400,000. Take the theatre. Of old, an evening's entertainment consisted of a four or five-act tragedy, plus a three-act farce, plus an oddment or so, the whole lasting for five hours. To-day if a dramatist writes a play taking three and a quarter hours the manager will stand up to him with a revolver and force him to cut it ; three hours is over long ; and the ideal length is two and a half hours.

And even so, the effort of watching the performance must be eased. The most popular form of theatrical entertainment is the revue, where no scene may exceed twenty minutes, and where there is no connection between scenes. I remember some years ago saying to a manager :

“ But you've forgotten the plot in this revue. The thing has no sequence.”

He replied :

“ You're wrong. I've not forgotten the plot. I've had the plot left out on purpose,

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and I don't want any sequence, and the public doesn't want any either. Saves thinking, you see." And I perceived that he spoke the truth.

In the cinema no scene must continue for longer than about two minutes. And it is well known that some cinema stars, brilliant folk, are so affected by their occupation that after a few years of it they become incapable of even the sustained concentration needed for reading a complete scenario ; in fact, they do and can read nothing but their press notices.

I do not wish to exaggerate. The art of sustained thinking has not wholly disappeared. When I see acres of buildings torn down, and the bowels of the earth torn up, and a vast new erection ascending to heaven on the site, I always remember, and not without awe, that somewhere behind the enormous and apparently higgledy-piggledy affair there is a supreme planning, co-ordinating, controlling mind, and perhaps two, which have been concentrating on it continuously for months and sometimes for years. Similarly with big businesses, manufacturing or mercantile.

No ! Sustained concentration of mind is

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still practised, possibly in some instances more strenuously than ever. But I suspect there is less of it among average persons—readers, playgoers, sightseers, and workers—than aforetime.



Sustained thinking is the root of all success. (And I am not using the word “success” in the ordinary narrow sense of achieving money or fame, or both. I am using it in the sense of making the best of oneself, making one’s life coherent, and making oneself and other people happy. Many humble people are far more successful, in the wide significance of the term, than some millionaires, princes of industry, and celebrities.)

And sustained thinking is an instrument which can be applied to almost any problem. Now and then a few problems of existence may be satisfactorily solved by a fluke or by a powerful instinct, but it may be said broadly that without sustained thinking the chances are twenty to one against any such problem reaching a correct solution. Only by real concentration of thought can all the factors of a difficulty be viewed, first one after another and then together, and the relative

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importance of the different factors accurately estimated.



Multitudes of individuals never think consecutively at all, and few think consecutively for more than a few minutes at a time. The majority of us go through life from one end to the other without once properly exercising the most important and the most interesting of human faculties. It is very odd. It ought to strike us as excessively odd, but unfortunately for ourselves it does not so strike us.

A young man chooses a career by accident. Some opening happens to present itself and he jumps at it without consideration—rather like a bird picking up a worm. Later he may perceive the drawbacks of what he has chosen, and he says: “If I’d only thought!” A less young man chooses a wife (or the woman chooses him) by the same facile method. Later, they both perceive the horrors of the situation. In a similar way they choose and buy their furniture.

And—what is worse perhaps in the long-run—citizens choose their Members of Parliament on this simple but silly principle of deciding at random, at a glance, in a moment. And of

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course afterwards they pass many moments in cursing the follies of the legislature, forgetting that the follies of the legislature are first of all the follies of the electorate and the direct result of the neglect of the electorate to think long and to think hard and to think straight.

It is inevitable that the failure to think must sooner or later land the thoughtless man in some dreadful hole. He then says to himself, aghast: "*I must think.*" But he can't think; for he has never learnt to think. He has always put off thinking. In the crisis he thinks he thinks—and the spectacle is pathetic—but he is only regretting and complaining and blaming anything in the universe except himself, and he will assuredly go ahead and make just the same mistake again. People who don't think—and they are the majority—do indeed make the same mistake again and again. They do not learn, for the reason that there is only one way of learning, and they will not take it, because it involves real thinking.

MY RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

IN my native town there were four principal churches of the Church of England and five principal chapels of Nonconformity. We Nonconformists had a double attitude towards the churches. Socially we admired and envied them. So much so that we often preferred to go to them for the religious ceremony of marriage, whereas we might have been just as securely married elsewhere. Religiously we despised Church of Englanders. They were not in our eyes so ineffably wicked or inexcusably misguided as Roman Catholics ; but they were pretty far gone in error, wilful or stupid. Indeed, it was impossible to trust certain Nonconformist preachers, and especially lay preachers, without being convinced that all Church of Englanders were on the sure way to everlasting damnation.

For Nonconformists of whatever sect were generally agreed on this : that to keep out of hell it was absolutely necessary to be "converted." Good morals, good works, were futile without conversion. It was no use being born in the belief that Christ died on the cross to save sinners ; you had to be

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“born again,” you had suddenly to see a mystic light, under the influence of which you believed with a new and immeasurably intenser belief. Church of Englanders contemned this experience as being allied to hysteria. Nonconformists pitied them for their blindness.

The double attitude of Nonconformity towards the Established Church puzzled, and offended, such unsubtle minds as my own. Further, considering that comparatively few persons were converted, it followed that the vast majority of the citizens were damned. And whenever as a child I thought about the matter at all I smiled malevolently to think that at least 90 per cent. of the wayfarers on pavements and in tram-cars would in due course join me in Hades, in spite of the fact that all of them had some religion. For in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century there were almost no “atheists” in our town. And if anybody did by chance ostentatiously deny the God of the Bible, sure enough he—I say “he” because female atheists were utterly unknown—he would one day, and soon rather than late, get himself converted in a manner equally ostentatious.

I will not say that I flouted the dogma of

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the Wesleyan Methodist sect. I suppose that I passively accepted it. But my acceptance of it had no emotional quality. The notion of being converted was very repugnant to me. I preferred damnation to conversion, as being less humiliating. The arguments in favour of the dogma did not make much appeal to me ; nor was I impressed by the mentality of the individuals who marshalled those arguments before my attention. My counter-arguments (brought forward only in strictly private boy-to-boy debates) were painfully crude but rather effective. As for example : " If God is omniscient He knows whether I am going to heaven or hell. If He knows, the question is already decided. If it is already decided, what does it matter what I do ? " Although the answer to this argument is quite simple and plausible, nobody ever suggested it to me. True, I did not dare to submit the point to the mighty.



Nothing happened in my childhood to foster in me any religious faith. And there were many things calculated to destroy faith. One of these was the fact that some of the pillars of the chapel had a rather dubious

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reputation for commercial integrity. Dishonest myself, and unsaved, I was cruelly uncompromising in my verdicts on the conduct of the saved. But the thing that most damaged in me the chances of a secure religious belief was the religious misbehaviour of my father. So far as I can remember I never had any religious instruction at home. My father compelled us to go to chapel and Sunday school, but for many years he did not go to Sunday school himself, and he very seldom went to chapel. On the rare occasions when he did decide to go to evening chapel the awed word ran round the house: "Pa is going to chapel." And it was as though chapel ought to be grateful for his condescension.

Such a state of affairs was bound to give unreality to all professions of religious faith. We children felt that religious observance was imposed upon us, not for religious but for disciplinary reasons. And this suspicion, or certainty, made Sunday all the more odious to us. Sunday was the worst day of the week, anticipated with horror, and finished with an exquisite relief. Two attendances at Sunday school and two religious services in a day!

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About six hours in duration, while my father either lay in bed or read magazines in the bow window ! It was inevitable that religion should come to be unalterably connected in my mind with the ideas of boredom, injustice, and insincerity.



And sometimes the offence was outrageous. As when a minister had the monstrous and callous effrontery to institute a Bible class for boys on the Saturday half-holiday. The resentment which I felt at this innovation, and at my father's upholding of it, burns in my mind to-day. It was surpassed only by my resentment against a sudden capricious paternal command that we children should say our prayers at our mother's knee. There was, for me, something revolting in the sentimentality, the story-bookishness, of this injunction ! Anyhow we loathed the act, which filled us with shame. Nobody could possibly in the history of the world have been in a mood more fatal to prayer than I was in the moments when I obeyed the command. I used to say bitterly to myself : " He likes to see us doing it." This did not, however, affect my general attitude towards prayer. Neither before nor since

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did I ever say a prayer with the slightest hope of it being answered.

When at the age of twenty-one I left home for London, one of the leading thoughts in my head was that I should be free of chapels and Sunday schools, and the desolation of Sabbaths. Such was the main result of my father's education of me in ceremonial religion, acting on my mocking and sceptical temperament. I had no religious beliefs and I was profoundly inimical to all manifestations of religion. In various other ways my father's influence on me was admirable, and I owe a great deal to it. I regret that I should have to lay stress on that part of his training in which he failed.



When I came to London and was free to direct my own existence according to my own ideas, I did, partly in a spirit of discovery and partly from habit, visit a few chapels and churches, but I very soon became indifferent to all the forms and rites of dogmatic religion; and religion, in the accepted sense of the word, ceased entirely to enter into my life. This was not the result of mental sloth. My conscience was not in the least disturbed. I

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did not feel that I was leaving undone things that I ought to do. I shared of course the widespread objection to dying, but I had no qualms about the unpleasant possibilities of a life beyond the grave for a man who was failing to perform an act of belief. Heaven and hell meant nothing to me. The wrath of God meant nothing to me. No variety of dogma could hold my attention. I was not actively concerned about the divine purpose or the nature of God.

One cause of my indifference was the cautious, agnostic, and self-sufficient bent of my mind. But the main cause of it undoubtedly lay in a profound conviction that the riddle of the universe was insoluble by human reason and that therefore the wise course for me was to leave it alone. I was told that religion was beyond reason. Nevertheless, all dogmatists were continually appealing to my reason—as indeed all dogmatists are bound to do. In any case, they appealed quite in vain. My difficulty was, and is, absolutely fundamental.

My reason was incapable of conceiving the act of creation. Others may be able to conceive an act of creation. I cannot. I can conceive something being made out of some-

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thing else. I can conceive men developing from the amoeba. But I cannot conceive something being made out of nothing. Suppose that I have the power of a divine creator. I stretch out my hand with open palm, in nothingness. I exercise the power to create, and lo ! something is lying in the palm of my hand that was not there before ! Well, I can suppose it, but I cannot conceive it as actually happening. I cannot see how it could happen. My mind has not the capacity for this feat. (Similarly with the conception of destruction.)

Hence I am forced to conclude that the universe, in some material form or other, was always in existence. But the word "always" involves infinity, and I cannot conceive infinity—either of time or anything else. I can carry my imagination backward through countless æons and still further and further backward, but not infinitely backward, so that at last I have to say : "Everything must have had a beginning." Which is equivalent to saying : "At some time something must have been created—or made out of nothing." And I am thrown down again into my original difficulty. I see plainly that there must be some Life-Force—call it God ; but my mind

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has not the power even to conceive the nature of God at all.



I have never been able to overcome this incapacity of mine. It has long since ceased to worry me. A religious need must presuppose a God, and it must be based in convictions about the nature of God. I marvel at the minds of unquestionably great men who have come to definite decisions as to what God is, what He thinks, how He acts. The daring of the doctrine of the Trinity staggers me. The subtlety of the altercations connected with, for example, the Athanasian and the Nicene creeds makes me dizzy. But I can feel no practical interest in these exercises of finite reason upon the infinite. I am, quite honestly and without any false modesty, too humble for them.

We all of us have to divide phenomena into the knowable and the unknowable. Dogmatists of every creed apparently know things which by me are unknowable. What can I do to remedy the imperfection of my mind? I should not object to having a religious creed. I should rather like to have one. A genuine creed must be a very convenient and com-

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fortable thing. But how can I get it ? I am told that I ought to try to believe. But why should I *try* to believe ? Trying to believe, for me, means bullying or forcing or dethroning my reason ; it means pretending that my mind can accomplish what I am convinced that it is incapable of accomplishing. I cannot do this, and I have no desire to attempt it. I am speaking only for myself ; nevertheless I am well acquainted with many people who are in precisely my case.



I have often read, and sometimes I have been told by word of mouth, that it is impossible for a normal man to gaze upon certain of this world's spectacles without being intimately convinced of the existence and the goodness of a Creator, and that therefore such spectacles alone must give a man religious faith—whether in his pride he acknowledges it or not. I agree that spectacles like a starlit night, a fine sunset (but more especially a fine sunrise), or a venerable cathedral full of stained glass, architectural style, incense, music, and the tradition of centuries of worship—I agree that these and kindred spectacles do arouse in my mind emotions which are vaguely uplifting,

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ennobling, and lovely. I say further that these emotions urge me, vaguely and temporarily, towards daily well-doing. But I do not agree that such spectacles help me in the slightest degree to form ideas about God clear and concrete enough to serve as a basis for religious belief. They do not even persuade me that there is any such being as a God existing entirely separate from myself. What they produce in me is awe, wonder, moral and artistic stimulation, and a grateful, contemplative pleasure in the simple fact that I am alive.

Moreover, I obtain just such emotions from all the phenomena of the universe. I cannot walk along a common street, while attentively examining in it all the astonishing and curious minute evidences of man's unconquerable determination to fulfil himself, without being imbued with a deep sense of the majesty and beauty of the whole inexplicable affair. The older I grow the more keenly I delight in the marvel of life. My reason stands apart, suspending its judgment indefinitely. . . . Nor does this suspension of judgment incommode me the least in the world. I do not long to look up to anything in sure faith. I

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can exist quite well without. I should not mind having something exterior to myself to cling to, to lean upon, to appeal to for help in moments of difficulty ; but I can manage unaided. I rather exult in the necessity of carrying on without help. I do not feel dwarfed nor humbled by the vastness and sublimity of my environment, for I am rooted in the private assurance that there is nothing more wondrous, or possessing greater ultimate potentialities, than the individual man.



Many years ago I had a dream, and in the dream I stood by my own dead body and saw the pennies upon my eyes. I cannot remember at this distance of time what the rest of the dream was, but it had to do with the adventures of the soul after death. This dream, while it convinced me of nothing and gave me no faith in a future life, made a considerable impression upon me as an artist, and I expanded the idea and the mood into a novel, which I called *The Glimpse*, the glimpse being of what lies beyond death. For the purpose of the novel I read a little in Oriental theology and philosophy, and out of that and out of such notions as I had previously met with I constructed a

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theory of the future and put it into a more or less realistic form.

I was amazed, almost frightened, by the quantity and the quality of the letters which reached me from various parts of the world, about the book (which nevertheless never had any sensational sale). The letters were not brilliant nor in any way striking, except in this: they revealed an intense and passionate curiosity about the future life. I saw that for very many people the nature of the future life was the question of all questions—a problem continually, perhaps continuously, at the back of their minds. The letters were such as one was obliged, in mere decency, to reply to—so poignant were they, so appealing. (Later, these letters began to affect my nerves, and I destroyed the bulk of them, and felt lightened of a load of human disquietude.)

At first I answered simply that the supernatural parts of my novel were inventions of mine or the result of appropriations from other speculators, that I had originally no interest in the problem other than an artistic interest, and that the book being finished and published I had no genuine interest in the problem at all and must therefore decline to join any of

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their societies for supernatural study or even to enter into arguments by correspondence. These earlier letters hurt or offended the recipients, and I perceived that I had not been tender enough towards the deepest feelings of my correspondents. Henceforward I modified the curt, uncompromising tone of my replies. So far as my memory goes there was not a correspondent who did not tremendously desire to believe in the immortality of the soul, and there were few who had failed to believe in it. (Not many of them were orthodox Christians.)



I saw then, as in a revelation, how different was the bent of my mind from that of the minds of all my unknown correspondents. As regards the theory set forth in my novel, I had naturally made it as plausible as I could to my own reason. But I never had the slightest belief in it, nor instinctive tendency to believe in it, nor wish to believe in it. I could discover no proof or presumption satisfactory to myself, that my soul had or had not existed before earthly birth, or that it would or would not survive after earthly death. Mathematical difficulties alone (as to

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the numbers of souls existing at any given moment) might well, I thought, render all the rival theories of immortality equally untenable.

Further, I could not even conceive my soul save in terms of matter.

And to-day I remain in the same unspeculative mood. I do not speculate, because I cannot discern any possibility of a positive result to my speculations. But my state is not therefore gloomy or hopeless or listless. Not a bit. For whether my soul has existed from everlasting or was born at the birth of my body, and whether my soul will cease with my body or continue in being for ever, I have in any case the certain assurance that it exists now and that my duty is to develop it in the best way according to my lights. If it survives as an entity, well and good—my efforts toward the improvement of it cannot be lost. If it does not survive as an entity, and at death is separated into its original particles, still well and good—my efforts must have had their effect on the undying particles. It is scientifically incredible that any effort should not have its due consequence—and an eternal consequence. And so it comes to pass that in living

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this present life without worrying myself about any other life, I can find scope for all my longings—and yet live in eternity too. Unhesitatingly I dismiss the singular notion that any other life can be more “divine” in essence than this present life.



Of course, after all, I have a dogma. Nor have I yet talked intimately with any man who had not. I doubt if life would be possible without one. If it is convenient to call my dogma my religion, let my dogma be so called. The theory of evolution has been scientifically proved to the satisfaction of the great majority of intelligent and thinking persons. We see illustrations of evolution everywhere and all the time. Evolution is the development of organisms in themselves and in their relations to other organisms. Now my dogma is that, in its broadest aspect, the movement of evolution is from something worse to something better. It is that human nature, with all its ups and downs, does improve—however slowly.

This assertion rests on no scientific basis. Its truth cannot be demonstrated. Indeed, many weighty and honest minds refuse to accept it, and I cannot by any process of

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rational argument show that they are wrong. Far from that, I am bound to admit that comparisons between present civilisation and past, between present philosophy and past, seem often to favour the past rather than the present. Nevertheless, I feel intensely that we are travelling from imperfection to perfection, and that here is the sole immediate answer to the enigma of the universe. If I did not feel this, if the consciousness of it did not permeate the whole of my existence, then I should become indifferent to life and would just as soon be dead, in the completest final sense, for ever and ever.

Fortified by my dogma, I find in life a divine savour that never satiates, and I live eagerly.

The famous theory about the principle of evil warring against the principle of good has no significance for me. To me evil is a purely negative conception. Evil is the lack, or the insufficiency, of good. There is no devil; there is only a growing good. Not that I have any expectation of perfection being attained, either in this life or in any future life, either by myself or by any other component parts of the universe. I strive after perfection. But I do not want actually to get it. Perfection

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is static. It destroys every motive for endeavour, and therefore renders the universe meaningless and futile—for me. Salvation—no! Salvation would be death. If I am to live I must not be saved; I must never be sure of salvation. Danger, struggle, conflict—these things alone constitute life, and more than aught else it is life that I desire.



I have spoken of self-sufficiency, and thereby have perhaps exposed myself to the charge of spiritual pride—an attribute which I detest almost as much as I detest anything. But I do not think that a refusal, or an inability, to trust blindly in that which I am incapable of comprehending, can properly be denounced as spiritual pride. Nor do I think, either, that to count myself as actually part of the divine force which makes my heart beat can be so treated. For as a fact I myself am just as incomprehensible and marvellous as anything exterior to me in the universe. I cannot fathom God, and I cannot fathom myself.

Again, my self-sufficiency is directed solely towards an unknown supposed Creator alleged to be exterior to myself—if such there be. It certainly does not extend to my fellow-men.

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For in the first place, I regard them all as equally divine with myself in their essence. And in the second place, I feel constantly the need of their companionship and support.

In a book so full of terrible pictures of the deity as the Bible, the phrase "God is love" may appear strange, even out of place. Nevertheless, this phrase, for me, contains all divine wisdom and is the key to the conduct of life. If we are all part of God, we must all love. Love means charity, humility, forgiveness, self-forgetfulness, kindliness. To think kind thoughts of others, and never to think unkind thoughts, is, for me, the summit of righteousness, the secret of happiness, and the only gateway to any success worth calling success. The oftener I read the Sermon on the Mount the more deeply am I convinced that here is the final practical wisdom. I disagree with the view that Christ's moral teaching will not stand the test of modern conditions. I think it will. But immense courage is needed to follow it, and exceedingly few of us have the necessary courage. It may be, and ought rightly to be, a counsel of perfection. Yet what other counsels should we seek ?

In no field of human thought has the teach-

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ing of Christ been more disastrously ignored than in theology. Millions of people have killed and been killed, tortured and been tortured, ostracised and been ostracised, because of differences about the proper attitude towards the Unknowable. Dogma may be necessary to humanity, but it has been the occasion of nearly every sin. The original reason for all this fury and pride was probably the violence and sincerity of the belief in the supreme, vital importance of particular dogmas.

To-day the face of things is changed. The fury has abated, and pride is a little bowed down. Dogma has become less dogmatic. And partly on this account, and partly owing to an increase of reasonableness, we no longer murder, or curse to everlasting hell, those who do not think as we do in the domain of theological speculation. I for one would not dream of going forth with a hatchet to destroy anybody who declined to subscribe to my dogma that the movement of evolution is from something worse to something better. And most people are now like me in respect to their dogmas. We have in some degree actually educated ourselves to perceive that

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there never was a dogma which did not contain some hint of the truth, and that there never will be one which contains the whole truth! This new breadth of mind is in itself an advance towards the religion of kindliness. For many years I was full of hatred, resentment, and scorn for the fierce upholders of the cult which clouded my youth. Now I am humbler. Those religionists had terrific ideals, even though kindliness in thought and broad tolerance were not among them. And if they arrogated to themselves the authority of God they were unconsciously demonstrating the divinity of man.

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Things that have interested me

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